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TECH ADVISOR

SEPTEMBER 2026

FANTASTIC FOLDABLES

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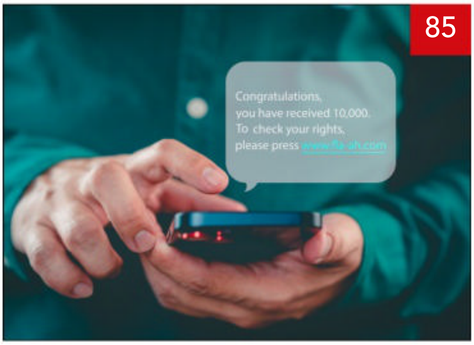

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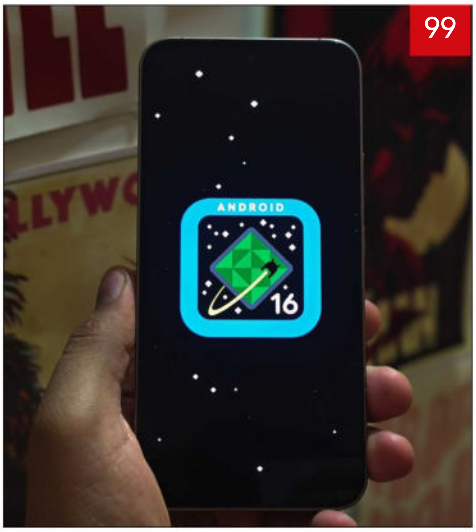
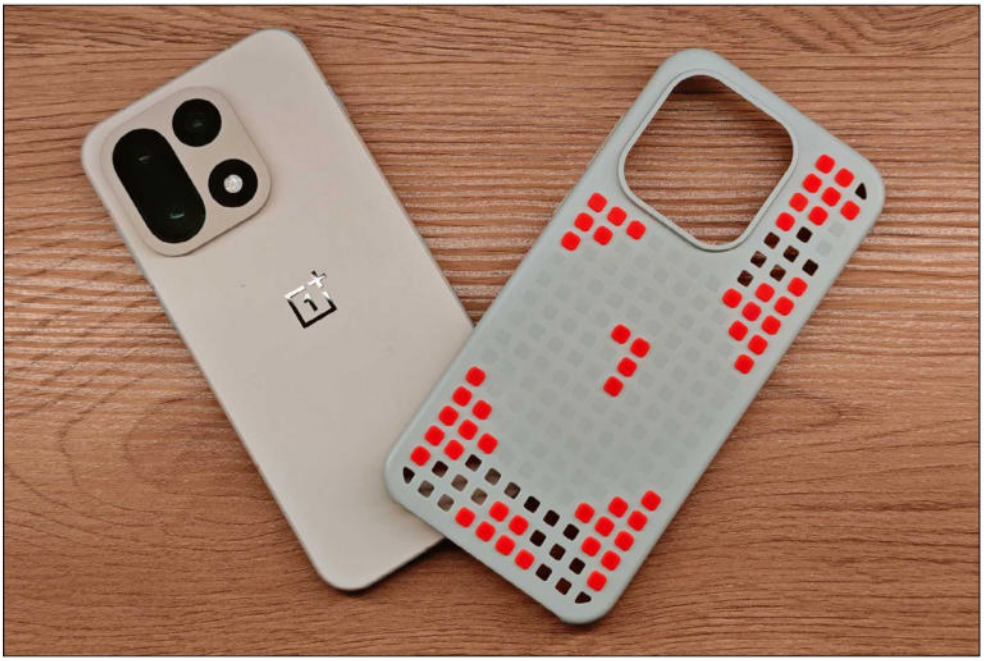




All signs suggest OnePlus is on its last legs

More evidence that Oppo is phasing the brand out. JON MUNDY reports

Fresh reports from Europe suggest that OnePlus is sliding into insignificance, but it's just the latest in a series of troubling signs for the brand.

While the company continues to turn out reasonably high-quality products like the OnePlus 15, the brutal truth is that we've been waiting for news of its slow and painful death all year.

Indeed, the indications of OnePlus's ill health go back even further.

OPPO'S EUROPEAN TAKEOVER

German website WinFuture (fave.co/4h4Oa5P) recently issued a report revealing that the local OnePlus website was now promoting the products of its parent company, Oppo.

Last year's OnePlus 15 offers speed and performance in a sleek new design.

Discount banners for Oppo products are prominently featured, along with the following eyebrow-raising (machine-translated) exhortation: "Looking for new technology that gives you everything you want from OnePlus devices? OPPO has the speed you need and the experience you trust."

Along with the reassurance that Oppo devices offer "seamless compatibility with existing OnePlus technology", it all smacks of a major product line being elbowed out of the door while attempts are made to placate a committed user base.

It's not on the UK OnePlus store (fave.co/4yeGKD9), but almost everything there is out of stock, including phones, tablets and smartwatches – many of which we've loved and reviewed with high scores and topped our Best Picks. Only a handful of accessories remain available to purchase.

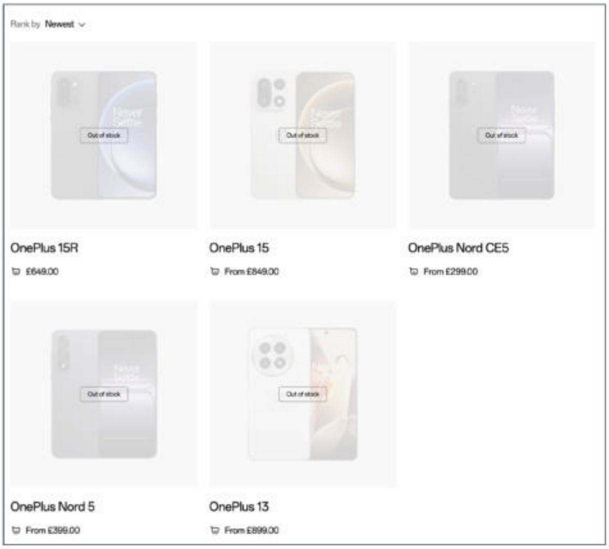
The report also points out that the number of OnePlus employees in Europe has noticeably decreased in recent months.

Not to get all 'inside baseball' on you, but we here at Tech Advisor have noted a marked increase in PR efforts for Oppo products and initiatives of late, with an almost complete drop-off in contact from OnePlus representatives since the start of 2026.

Furthermore, phone launches we were expecting, such as the OnePlus Nord 6, simply haven't materialised.

A LONG TIME COMING

All in all, it's not a great look for a brand that established itself with an upstart, anti-establishment attitude around a dozen years ago.



OnePlus 15R
£649.00

OnePlus 15
From £849.00

OnePlus Nord CE5
From £299.00

OnePlus Nord 5
From £399.00

OnePlus 13
From £899.00

This is what you'll see if you visit OnePlus's UK store.

With hindsight, the writing appears to have been on the wall for OnePlus as far back as October of 2020. This was when OnePlus co-founder and the brand's youthful driving force Carl Pei left the company. He would go on to establish the similarly punchy London-based company Nothing, which is about to launch the Phone (4b).

Pei's official exit came just a couple of months after his fellow OnePlus founder, Pete Lau, rejoined Oppo as Senior Vice President and Chief Product Experience Officer.

Less than a year later, Lau became SVP and Chief Product Officer (CPO) for Oppo as OnePlus formerly merged with its parent company. From that point on, OnePlus effectively became the Oppo sub-brand that it had always denied being during its early run of aggressively priced "flagship-killer" phones.

While reviews of the OnePlus 15 were widely positive around the time of its late-2025 release (that battery life though), I found some of the company's decisions concerning.

Its design was blander, more generic, and not what we had come to expect from OnePlus. The camera system was technically inferior to that of its predecessor, and the Hasselblad partnerships had been dropped. To this day, you'll need to choose an Oppo phone like the Oppo Find X9 Pro if you want a Hasselblad-approved photographic experience from your phone.

As recently as June, Oppo announced the Reno 16 series of phones, with all three models getting a UK launch.

THE FINAL YEAR OF ONEPLUS?

Fast forward to 2026, and we've lost count of the number of news pieces reporting on the OnePlus brand's imminent demise.

January brought the claims that OnePlus was being "wound down and put on life support" and effectively "dismantled" by parent company Oppo.

Evidence cited in this Android Headlines report (fave.co/44UdwvW) included market analysis indicating a 20 percent year-on-year sales drop in 2024, as well as a 32.6 percent loss of market share in the company's key India market.

OnePlus came out with a swift denial, calling the claims "false" and telling us that its business continued "to proceed as normal".

It should be noted that the original report came under fire at the time for its use of AI in the structuring of the piece, prompting a complete rewrite – though the substance of the piece remained.

Then, in March, established tipster Yogesh Brar issued an X post (since deleted) claiming that OnePlus was shutting down in "select Global markets".

While the brand's China operations would continue, the tipster claimed that it was "Not a good news for US, UK & EU customers" [sic].

Oppo's attempts to deny (and perhaps even suppress) all such reports suggest that it's not quite ready to wash its hands of the OnePlus brand just yet.

Further evidence of this comes from fresh product launches like the OnePlus Nord 6 and (more recently) the OnePlus Pad 3 Pro, as well as the limited rollout of the OnePlus Pad 4.

Despite all this, neither company seems to want to do it the proper way and make an official announcement.

Regardless, all indications suggest that the company is seeking an orderly transition to the Oppo name and a managed decline for the brand that once promised to "Never Settle".

The OnePlus Pad 4 received a limited rollout.

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fn
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Googlebook

8 Googlebooks tipped for launch and 1 is a tablet

And they're not all laptops. JON MUNDY reports

There could be as many as eight Googlebook laptops available at launch, according to a new leak.

Google unveiled its new Googlebook laptop venture in mid-March, promising premium laptops that essentially merges the company's Chromebook and Android efforts with Gemini AI driving it all. Essentially, this is Google's answer to the MacBook Neo, but with added AI smarts. We knew at the time that Acer, Asus, Dell, HP and Lenovo were all on board to produce their own Googlebook hardware (Google isn't making its own this time around), but that was about it for specifics.

Now, it appears that there will be as many as eight distinct Googlebook devices when the laptops go on sale this autumn, as discovered by Chrome Unboxed in the Chromium code.

Four of these devices are expected to run on Intel's Core Ultra 300 hardware, while three will be running on Qualcomm's Snapdragon X series chips. The final one should be powered by MediaTek's Kompanio Ultra chip.

Although we don't have much more than codenames for each (see below), it appears that custom splash screens are being made for each of the Intel devices will show during boot up and the MediaTek device won't be a traditional clamshell laptop. Instead, it will be a "thin, lightweight, high-efficiency detachable tablet that will anchor the ultra-portable side of the ecosystem."

GOOGLEBOOK CODENAMES

Intel

Felino
Lapis
Moonstone
Ruby

Qualcomm Snapdragon

Quenbi
Mica
Quartz

MediaTek

Sapphire

WHAT TO EXPECT

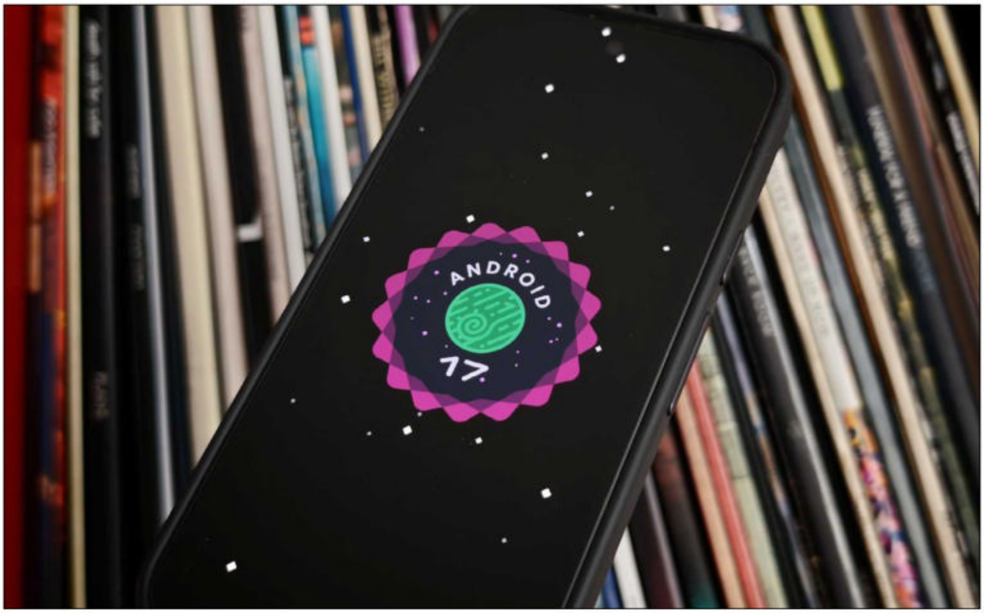
When Google showed off its new laptop initiative, it revealed a distinctive 'Glowbar' LED notification lighting system. This will be on all Googlebooks, and is promised to be "both functional and beautiful".

Google is also rumoured to be bringing a similar external lighting system to its Pixel 11 smartphone series over the coming months.

Elsewhere, Google promised that its Googlebook series would feature "premium craftsmanship and materials", so we're presuming they'll be more high-end than most of the cheap and cheerful Chromebooks to have hit the market over the years.

One thing seems certain – you shouldn't be wanting for choice once the first wave of Googlebooks hit the market.

The Googlebook's 'Glowbar' LED notification lighting system.



Google starts to unpick Android 17 problems with July update

Google goes bug hunting. JON MUNDY reports

Google has started rolling out the first update to Android 17 since its problematic debut, fixing at least some of the early teething problems.

Android 17 started arriving on Pixel phones on 16 June, and we've been reporting on the ensuing stream of bugs and glitches ever since. It's fair to say that things have not gone smoothly for what should be a 'stable release'.

Hopefully, this first Android 17 update will go some way to making up for that. The July 2026 security patch is here for everything from the Google Pixel 6 right through to the Google Pixel 10a, and every Google phone released in between.

ANDROID 17 BUGS SQUASHED

The officially released list of fixes is hardly extensive, but it's welcome nonetheless. Perhaps the biggest news here is that Google has addressed the Android 17 system issue that saw some Pixel devices failing to load or becoming stuck in a boot loop.

Google's update also fixes an issue that saw certain apps crashing or failing to launch. It also fixes a bug that saw system widgets displaying incorrectly.

There was an issue with Pixel Fold devices that saw navigation buttons changing alignment after folding and unfolding. That should now be sorted.

Finally, a bug that saw the wallpaper shape effect incorrectly covering the subject rather than appearing in the background has been squashed.

Good work, Google. Now, about those connectivity and random touchscreen input issues…

PIXEL 11 LAUNCH CONFIRMED

Google will want to get its Android 17 house in order, given the recent confirmation that it will be announcing the Google Pixel 11 range on 12 August.

That's a little earlier than we predicted (though only by six days), and Google will want to hit the ground running with its glossy new phones.

Especially so now that we've had it confirmed that Samsung will beat Google to the punch with its own Unpacked event in July.

Google is expected to offer a slightly more exciting upgrade than last year, particularly with the Pixel 11 Pro, but it probably won't have anything as exciting as the brand-new Samsung Galaxy Z Fold8 Wide.

The July 2026 security patch is here for everything from the Google Pixel 6 right through to the Google Pixel 10a.

Handy new Android feature won’t come to Samsung Galaxy

Google is reportedly working on an Android-to-Windows-PC backup system, and Samsung isn’t invited. JON MUNDY reports

Google is reportedly working to improve Android-to-PC backups, but Samsung may be omitted from its future plans.

The Android 17 developer is said to be working on a new automated Windows PC-based backup system for its mobile platform that works through the Quick Share app.

According to Android Authority (fave.co/4w5eGRi), however, Samsung phones may not be supported in this new initiative. Having delved into version 26.26.33 of Google Play

Services, the website has discovered an information page that runs through a yet-to-launch Automatic backup system.

Said system would be free to use, and would automatically save selected files to your PC without the need for any cloud storage. You'll just need to ensure that you're signed into your Google account on both your phone (which seems a given) and your Windows PC.

Photos and videos will then back up on a daily basis when your phone and PC are in close proximity and on the same Wi-Fi network.

Samsung users will not be able to make use of this feature, though no explanation is given as to why. It seems likely that Samsung's own Smart Switch provision with its own competing backup process is to blame. Still, as stated, it wouldn't have been the first instance of Google and Samsung duplicating features.

Given that Samsung's solution doesn't currently support automatic backups, it seems a shame that Samsung phone users are going to miss out.

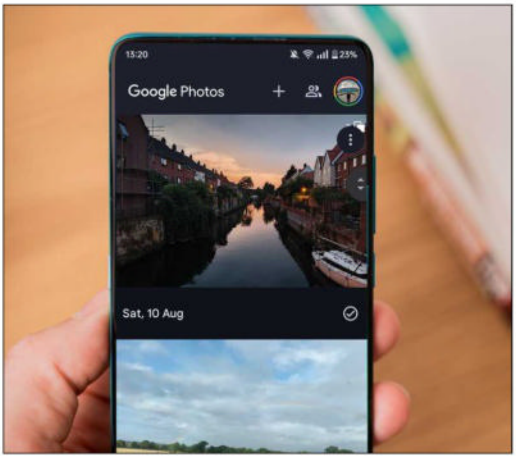
GOOGLE GETS STINGY ON STORAGE

While we're on the subject of Google backups, the company has revealed a slightly stingy new approach to calculating account storage.

Starting from 7 July (via 9to5Google, fave.co/4yknjJf), all Android backup data will be counted against a user's storage limit. Prior to this, only media was counted.

New sign-ups will be affected by this change right away, while existing Google customers will find it being implemented over the coming months.

Google doesn't anticipate this being a huge issue, with Android backups said to take up around 40MB of storage on average. The company will also be offering more fine control over which data and apps are backed up.



The Automatic backup system will back up photos and videos on a daily basis when your phone and PC are in close proximity and on the same Wi-Fi network.

Honor Magic V6

Price when reviewed: From £1,999 ★★★★☆

The Honor Magic V6 originally broke cover in China back in March, but it took a while to make its way to Europe. Now, it's finally available to buy in the UK, and it's aiming to be the best foldable yet.

Unfortunately for Honor, the competition is stronger than ever, and it's only going to get tougher when Apple's long-rumoured foldable hits the market. Does this slim powerhouse offer enough to remain compelling?

It certainly looks the part, has one of the largest batteries of any foldable ever, it's the first to be IP69 certified, and it's somehow still one of the thinnest. We're off to a good start. I've been putting it to the test over the last couple of weeks, and here's what I think.

DESIGN

The Honor Magic V6 looks a lot like the Magic V5, with the most noticeable difference being the shape of the

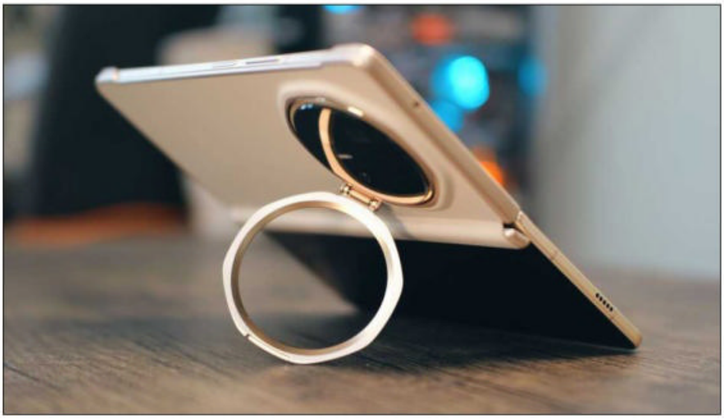
The Magic V6's camera bezel is now more angular than the V5's.

camera bezel. It's now more angular, with an octagonal shape. New colour options also help differentiate it from the last generation. The red version is probably the most eye-catching; it has a deep, almost blood-red rear panel with a textured finish. I have the gold version, which is also very flashy. Friends have commented that it looks like a phone a Saudi prince or Kim Kardashian would use.

The colour shifts slightly when the light hits it; there's a subtle triangular repeating pattern across both the hinge and the rear, and it somehow remains fingerprint-free despite being quite shiny. It's a cool look. The included case is also super-premium, with a cream leatherette covering and a rose-gold camera surround that doubles up as a fold-out kickstand.

Of course, if you want something a little less attention-grabbing, there are more traditional black and white models. The latter has a hidden advantage, too – it's the slimmest of the bunch at just 8.75mm when closed, and Honor reckons it's the slimmest foldable on the market right now.

I haven't used the white one, and maybe it's noticeably slimmer, but for what it's worth, the gold version definitely looks and feels a bit thicker

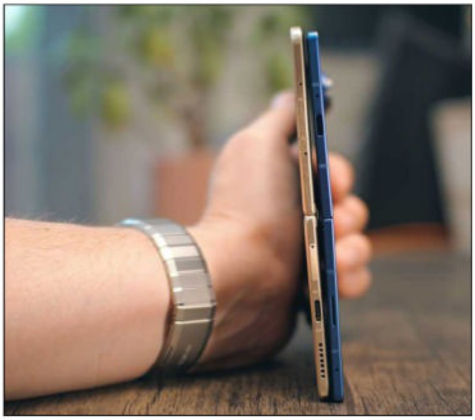


The rose-gold camera surround doubles up as a fold-out kickstand.

than my 8.9mm Galaxy Z Fold7. I am splitting hairs, though; this phone is still thinner than a lot of flagship bar-phones. So whether or not it's the slimmest, it's more than slim enough to feel good in your pocket.

It's also worth pointing out that the cover display is now flat, with a more symmetrical shape. It makes the phone look even more like a traditional bar phone when folded shut, but the unavoidable squared-off corner of the hinge gives it away slightly.

As important as the dimensions of a foldable are, the durability is just as crucial. And thankfully, the Honor Magic V6 is built like a tank. It's IP69-rated, the highest of any foldable phone. This means it's essentially immune to dust, and it'll withstand dunks in fresh water or blasts from jets of hot water. Foldable tech has come a long way.



The gold version looks and feels a bit thicker than my 8.9mm Galaxy Z Fold7.

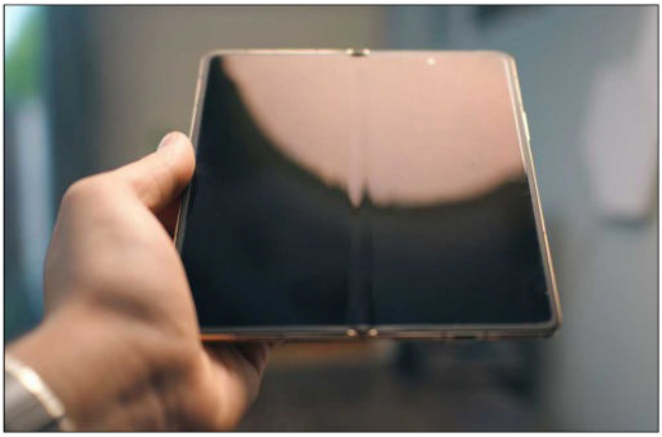
It's also built to be tough, with anti-scratch 'NanoCrystal Shield' glass on the front, and a 'Super Steel' hinge that improves the impact resistance. SGS certifications back up these claims, too, as the phone has been awarded 5 stars for drop resistance. I haven't treated my review sample too roughly, but it's nice to know it should stay in one piece if gravity gets the best of me.

DISPLAY

Foldables are all about the screen, so let's start with the star of the show, the inner display. It's just shy of 8 inches diagonally, which means it's up there with some of the largest book-style options on the market. It's almost perfectly square, which means it's great for running two apps side-by-side.

This flexible screen has a 120Hz refresh rate and boasts a wild 5,000 nits of peak brightness. You should always take these brightness claims with a large helping of salt, but regardless, it's a very bright display that's easy to see outdoors.

The inner screen has a shiny screen protector (albeit with an anti-reflective coating), and that's both a good and a bad thing. As I've mentioned in other foldable reviews, the more matt screen



The inner display's crease is admirably shallow.

protectors do a better job of disguising the crease, but they also attract fingerprints. This one doesn't smudge up as easily, but despite Honor's best efforts, you do get some unwanted reflections along the groove.

Speaking of which, the crease is admirably shallow, and not too long ago it would have been the best I'd ever come across. However, I've been using the Oppo Find N6 almost daily since it came out, and sadly, this one can't quite compete. It's still super impressive, and miles better than the Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold. It's slightly less noticeable than the Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7, too.

Moving on to the outer display, it's almost indistinguishable from a flagship bar phone screen, aside from being very slightly narrower than usual. It has lovely slim bezels on all sides, a zippy 120Hz refresh rate, and an even-higher peak brightness of 6,000 nits.

It just feels like a normal phone. Then, when you want a bigger screen for your content, games, or multitasking, you just pop it open.

As has been the case with the last few generations of Honor foldable, there's no major downside to using the phone folded down; it just feels like a normal phone. Then,

The outer display is almost indistinguishable from a flagship bar phone screen when you want a bigger screen for your content, games, or multitasking, you just pop it open.

As usual, Honor has put some effort into eye-protection features, and both screens support 4,320Hz PWM dimming. That's something that you'll really appreciate if you're sensitive to flicker. Both screens also support stylus input, though sadly, I didn't have an Honor stylus on hand to try it out.

The luxurious displays are backed up by a decent set of speakers. The stereo pair creates a nice wide soundstage, can get more than loud enough, and has a decent amount of low-end response. They're no match for the bass-forward speakers of the Magic 8 Pro, but there's only so much you can do with a chassis this slim.

The Magic V6 has Qualcomm's most powerful chip inside, the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5.

PERFORMANCE

The Magic V6 has Qualcomm's most powerful chip inside, the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5, and the global model comes equipped with 16GB of RAM and 512GB of storage. With a slim foldable phone like this, thermal performance is always going to be a hurdle, but Honor has slapped a sizable vapour chamber in here to keep it running at its best.

The V6 kept up with my daily performance needs without issue. With a foldable, I often have three apps open at once, dipping between each of them, and frequently playing music or streaming video at the same time. Even still, the phone barely broke a sweat.

You have to fire up a pretty demanding game to get this phone to struggle a bit, and as luck would have it, I'm quite addicted to NTE. It's an open-world game with stunning graphics and a massive urban map that most phones struggle to render, but the Magic V6 didn't have too much trouble.

The game ran smoothly on the "Extreme" graphics preset at 60fps, and while it did get pretty hot, especially around the camera area, the performance didn't seem to suffer. I had the best experience using a GameSir clamp controller, which kept the heat away from my palms.

When it comes to benchmark scores, things get quite interesting. While most of the scores were excellent, the phone had serious trouble completing the 3DMark Wildlife Extreme Stress Test. I normally run this test with the phone unfolded, but it would overheat and kill the benchmark every time I tried.

In fairness, it has been quite warm here in the UK lately, but I haven't had that happen before. Running the test on the cover display, it was able to complete with a decent score, but it couldn't do that on the foldable screen. In real-world usage, though, I never had such issues.

NTE ran smoothly on the "Extreme" graphics preset at 60fps.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Honor Magic V6: 10,292
Motorola Razr Fold: 9,077
Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 6,238
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7: 8,882
OnePlus Open: 4,498
Honor Magic V5: 5,391

PCMark battery test

Honor Magic V6: 11 hours, 45 minutes
Motorola Razr Fold: 10 hours, 49 minutes
Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 13 hours, 1 minute
Honor Magic V5: 9 hours, 1 minute

Charge in 30 minutes

Honor Magic V6: 67%
Motorola Razr Fold: 54%
Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold: 52%
Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7: 50%
OnePlus Open: 83%
Honor Magic V5: 62

CAMERAS

The Honor Magic V6 has identical camera hardware to the previous generation, which means there aren't any particularly exciting developments to speak of.

But, with that said, the V5 already had one of the most impressive camera set-ups of any foldable phone, and the competition hasn't been pushing the boat out too much – so it's still one of the best.

On the rear, you get a 50Mp main camera with a decently sized 1/1.56-inch sensor and a bright f/1.6 lens. It's joined by a 50Mp ultrawide with a seriously wide 13mm-equivalent FOV, and a very nice 64Mp telephoto. There are also dual 20Mp selfie snappers, one punching through each display.

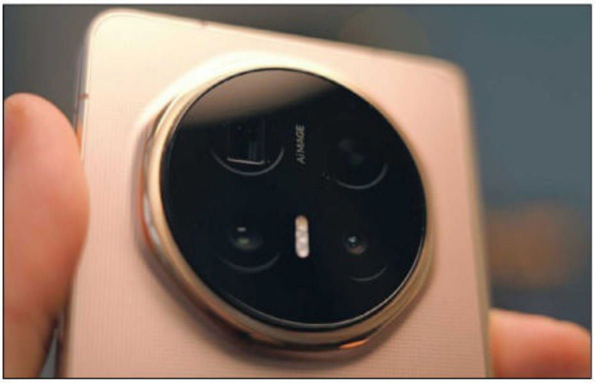
This is a very versatile set of lenses, enabling you to shoot everything from super wide landscapes to intimate portraits. As usual, it's the telephoto that I enjoyed using the most, and this might be the best telephoto camera ever to grace a foldable phone.

It has a fairly large 1/2-inch sensor, and it can focus pretty close up. Your subject only needs to be about 20cm from the lens, and combined with the 70mm equivalent focal length, that creates some lovely compression and natural bokeh.

Of course, you can zoom further with a digital crop, and the camera app lets you go all the way to 100x if you want. If you're over 10x, you can use generative AI to clean up the images, but even without doing so, you can get pretty usable images at 20x or so.

I've already mentioned how wide the ultrawide is, and I love that about it, but otherwise, it's definitely a step down in quality compared to the other lenses. It's also the least impressive at night, where motion blur becomes hard to contend with. In the right lighting, though, it's capable of some really impressive shots.

The main camera is, as ever, the most reliable of the trio. The larger sensor means it fares the best in low-light situations, and it's slightly sharper than the other cameras in the daytime.



The Magic V6 has one of the best camera set-ups of any foldable phone.

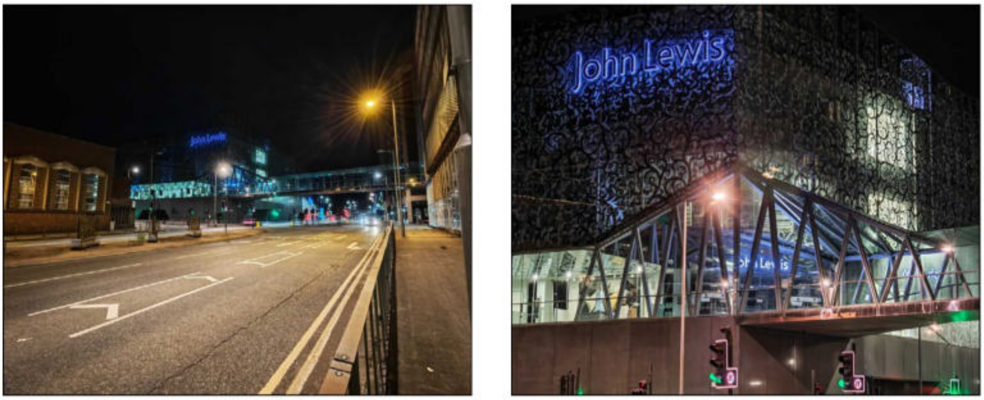
The selfie cameras aren't anything to write home about. They get the job done, and they're perfectly fine for Zoom calls, but when you have such impressive cameras on the back, it's really worth flipping the phone around

As you can see in these test shots, and the top three images on page 22, the Magic V6 might have the best telephoto camera ever to grace a foldable phone.

and making use of that cover screen to get properly impressive photos.

Honor's image processing can be a little hit and miss, but I feel like it's getting more consistent, and when it hits, you can get some truly stunning

As you can see below, the fairly large 1/2-inch sensor can focus pretty close up.



The main sensor is your best option in low light.

images. My main gripe is with motion blur in portrait mode. I'm not sure why, but I get a lot of blurry shots when artificial background blur is enabled, even when the light is decent.

Otherwise, I'm really happy with the images I captured on the Magic V6. The Harcourt portrait modes are as impressive as ever, and the filters elsewhere let you change the look of your photos quite dramatically. I'm particularly into the Nostalgic Negative filter, which gives a lovely contrasty, cross-processed look with blue shadows.

When it comes to video shooting, the offering is a little less robust. That's not to say it's bad, but having spent a lot of time with the Oppo Find N6, I got used to having a decent Log profile, 4K120 recording, and Dolby Vision. None of those are present here. There is a Log profile, but it only works on the main sensor, and it produces some unusually grainy shadows.

If you don't have quite such professional demands, though, you'll probably be very pleased with the video performance. You can shoot at up to 4K 60fps on every camera except the selfie camera, which maxes out at 4K 30fps. The stabilisation is good, and the microphones are decent, too.

BATTERY LIFE

The Honor Magic V6 has the largest battery of any foldable phone that I have tested to date. Somehow, Honor has managed to squeeze a 6,660mAh battery pack into this razor-thin frame. Samsung, I hope you're taking notes.

This capacity pales in comparison to the Chinese 1TB version of this phone, which has an astonishing 7,150mAh battery, but, as we've seen a lot lately, EU regulations mean we can't get quite such a massive pack in the West.

Regardless, it doesn't matter too much because this battery is more than good enough. Despite using the large internal screen frequently and taking loads of photos, I managed to make this phone last a day and a half throughout most of my testing. Of course, heavy gaming knocks that down a bit, but you'll rarely, if ever, need to charge this before bedtime.

Charging is rapid, too, provided you have a strong enough wall adapter (you only get a USB-C cable in the box) to make use of the 80-watt speeds. I was able to take this device from flat to almost 70 percent charged in just half an hour; you can't ask for much more than that.

You'll rarely, if ever, need to charge this before bedtime.

If you prefer wireless charging, you can do so without sacrificing too much speed. The Honor Magic V6 can be juiced up at up to 66 watts with an official Honor wireless charging pad.

SOFTWARE & APPS

The Magic V6 runs MagicOS 10, Honor's custom flavour of Android 16. It's essentially the same software that we've seen on the last few Honor flagships, so if you've tried one of those, you won't be in for many surprises.

Honor's software can be a little divisive. It strays pretty far from the typical Android experience; Instead, it's starting to feel closer to iOS. Whether or not that's a good thing will depend on your preferences. That said, it's extremely customisable, so if you don't like the styling or the layout of something, you can most likely change it.

On the whole, I quite like it. It feels quick and responsive, it looks nice by default, and there are plenty of tools to customise it further. As mentioned, there's a lot of iOS influence, including some Liquid Glass-like elements, a Dynamic Island clone, split notifications/quick

The Magic V6 runs MagicOS 10, Honor's custom flavour of Android 16.

settings, and the ability to disable the app drawer. They're not the most original choices, but they work well, and most are entirely optional.

Honor gives you tonnes of AI features, including all the usual transcription, translation, and summary tools, as well as some very advanced photo editing features.

Multitasking is great, too. You can display apps side-by-side in split view, and then add a third that will just peek out at the side of the screen, springing into action when you need it. Or, if you prefer, you can use floating windows and get even more on screen at once.

What I find most exciting, though, is the way the Magic V6 is able to integrate with Apple products. In particular, how well it works with my MacBook. If you install the Honor Workstation app from the Mac App Store, you can share files, copy and paste between devices, remotely control your phone, and even use the V6 as a wireless second screen.

But the fun doesn't stop there. The Honor Magic V6 can also natively browse and manage files in your iCloud account, and with Honor Connect, you can AirDrop files to and from iPhones, too. It's great if you're

You can display apps side-by-side in split view, and then add a third that will just peek out at the side of the screen.

The Honor Workstation app lets you integrate the Magic V6 with Apple products.

always hopping between ecosystems (as I often am).

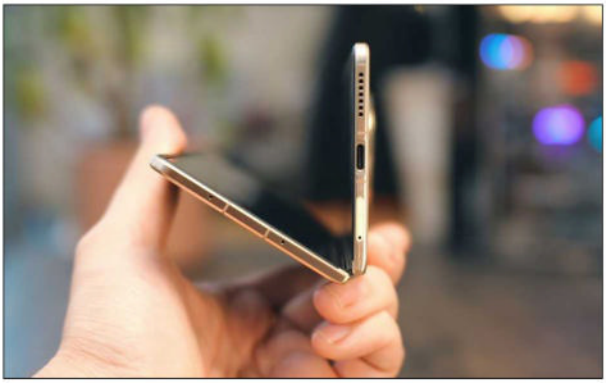
So, overall, it's a solid software experience, but it's not without its downsides. My biggest complaint about Honor phones has remained unaddressed for the past few years. The battery management is hyper-aggressive, and by default, it'll kill background apps with reckless abandon. This means you'll often suffer severely delayed notifications until you do some tinkering and ensure that these apps stay open.

It's easy enough to fix, and I can understand the logic – because Honor phones always have excellent battery life – but it's super annoying, and I'd love to see it addressed.

Honor promises seven years of software updates and security patches for its flagship devices, matching the likes of Samsung and Apple. It doesn't get much better than that, though you may be waiting a while for the Android 17-based MagicOS 11.

VERDICT

The Magic V6 is easily one of the most appealing foldable phones on the market right now. The hardware is gorgeous, the screens are impressive, it's powerful, and the cameras are top-notch. If you want a large-screen foldable phone, but don't want to



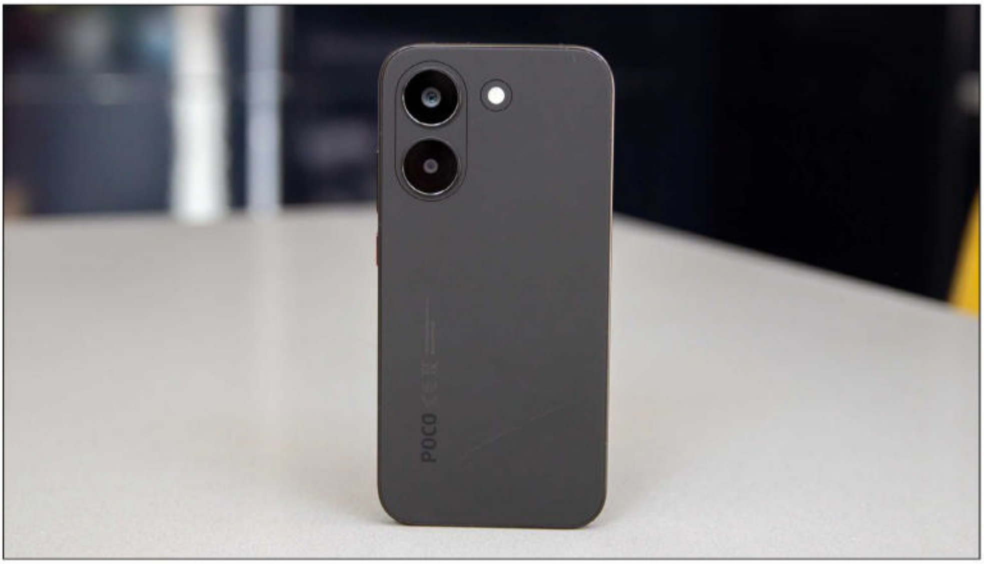
The Magic V6 is easily one of the most appealing foldable phones on the market right now compromise on the cameras too much, this is a great choice. That said, savvy shoppers could opt for last year's model and get a very similar overall experience for much less money. It's down to £1,099 on Honor's UK site, it's still mega powerful, and it has the same cameras. It won't be in stock forever, though.

It's also worth remembering that the Galaxy Z Fold8 and Z Fold8 Ultra are expected this summer, with Apple's long-awaited foldable iPhone likely in September. So, personally, I'd want to see what they bring to the table before taking the plunge.

If you can't wait, the Honor Magic V6 is an excellent option, and will likely remain so. I can't imagine Samsung matching the battery capacity, and I very much doubt it'll be outdone on camera performance. Other than a few software niggles, it's a brilliant phone. Luke Baker

SPECIFICATIONS

- 7.95-inch (2,352x2,172; 403ppi) Foldable LTPO2 AMOLED, 1B colours, 120Hz, 4320Hz PWM, 5,000 nits (peak). Cover display: 6.52-inch (2,420x1,080; 406ppi), LTPO2 OLED, 1B colours, 120Hz, 4320Hz PWM, 6,000 nits (peak)
- Anti-scratch NanoCrystal Shield screen protection
- Android 16, up to 7 major Android upgrades, MagicOS 10
- Qualcomm SM8850-AC Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 (3nm) processor
- Octa-core (2x 4.6GHz Oryon V3 Phoenix L, 6x 3.62 GHz Oryon V3 Phoenix M) CPU
- Adreno 840 GPU
- No card slot
- 12GB/16GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB/1TB storage
- Three rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.6, 23mm (wide), 1/1.56", 1.0µm, PDAF, OIS; 64Mp, f/2.5, 70mm (periscope telephoto), 1/2.0", 0.7µm, PDAF, OIS, 3x optical zoom; 50Mp, f/2.2, 13mm, 122˚ (ultrawide), AF
- Selfie camera: 20Mp, f/2.2, (wide), 0.61µm
- Cover camera: 20Mp, f/2.2, (wide), 0.61µm
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e/7, dual-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 6.0
- GPS (L1+L5), GLONASS (L1), BDS (B1I+B1c+B2a), GALILEO (E1+E5a)
- NFC
- USB Type-C 3.1, OTG, Display Port 1.2
- Fingerprint (side-mounted)
- Non-removable 6,660mAh battery
- Unfolded: 156.7x145.6x4mm. Folded: 156.7x 74.5 x 8.8mm
- 219g



Xiaomi Poco X8 Pro

Price when reviewed: From £349 ★★★★☆

Poco's aim is to offer high-performance phones to younger buyers with tighter budgets, with a consistent goal of delivering a great gaming experience. That often leads to phones that are almost laughably cheap, but not in a bad way.

The Poco X8 Pro is the follow-up to 2025's Poco X7 Pro and sits alongside the Poco X8 Pro Max, which sits in a new, slightly higher position, costing a little more and bumping some of the specs. For those who don't know, Poco is a sub-brand of Xiaomi, sitting alongside Redmi, so much of the experience is close to Xiaomi phones.

I used the Poco X8 Pro as my main phone for a couple of weeks to see just how it performs, what you get for the money and where it makes compromises compared to pricier handsets.

DESIGN

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the Poco X8 Pro has lost something of its character, ditching the two-tone finish of the Poco X7 Pro and leaving buyers with a rather underwhelming choice of black, white and mint green.

That two-tone finish was plastic, however, and some may prefer the understated seriousness of the X8 Pro's design. Not much changes from previous handsets: there's still a dual camera on the back, the LED flash now changes to a round design rather than oblong, but that's about the sum of the visual differences.

It retains a flat aluminium frame, with a red chamfer cut into the power button on the side, but it's otherwise rather plain. The display sits flat too, perhaps a nod to its intended target market of gamers, and preferable to curved display edges for those wanting to maximise touchable screen space.

There's an IP68 rating – not bad for a £299 phone – but it doesn't extend to the IP69K rating that many devices are starting to offer. Not that it matters: IP68 survives submersion, while IP69K resists high-pressure hot water jets, begging the question of what you're actually doing with your phone.

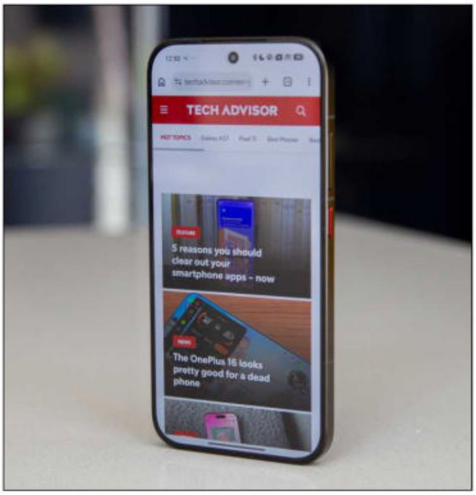
The black version of the Poco X8 Pro that I tested is inoffensive in its design, but not wildly exciting either. With a weight of 201g and thickness of 8.38mm, it's right around average for a modern smartphone.

DISPLAY

With the Poco X8 Pro Max expanding to 6.83 inches, the Poco X8 Pro is a little smaller than the X7 Pro. That's the only real change here, with the X8 Pro keeping the high resolution and refresh rate, while the peak brightness creeps a little higher than the previous iteration, at 3,500 nits.

As I said in the design section, it's a flat display, ideal for gamers, along with that 120Hz refresh rate and fast touch sampling rates.

I found the display to be plenty bright, with nice vibrant colours, with options in the menu to tweak it to your preference. While those peak


TECH ADVISOR
5 reasons you should clear out your smartphone apps – now
The OnePlus 16 looks pretty good for a dead phone

The black version of the Poco X8 Pro we tested is inoffensive in its design, but not wildly exciting either.

brightnesses are reserved for HDR content, I found the daily brightness to be good – so no complaints there.

There's a factory-fitted screen protector, just like most phones these days. I found this picked up a couple of marks during my testing, which I doubt would have scratched the screen, so it's perhaps a little softer than I'd like it to be. The display itself is Gorilla Glass 7i, which is typical of mid-range phones.

The speakers on the Poco X8 Pro are good, with the ear speaker handling most of the highs and the speaker on the base of the phone contributing to the bass and much of the mid-range drive.

The bright display has vibrant colours, with options to tweak it to your preference.

I found calls to be clear, with no complaints from those on the other end of the line either.

PERFORMANCE

Poco has established much of its reputation on offering phones with powerful hardware at prices that rivals struggle to meet. That's the case for the X8 Pro, following the trend of other Poco models. Here, the Dimensity 8500 Ultra sits at the heart of this phone.

That puts it in the sub-flagship phone category while being priced as a mid-range device. That's a great starting point for this device, which runs nicely and smoothly. It also kept its composure during long sessions playing Call of Duty: Mobile, avoiding any noticeable overheating.

I was testing the version with 12GB RAM, which is paired with 512GB storage, but there's also the option for 8GB, with either 256- or 512GB storage.

This model has slightly lower-tier hardware than the X8 Pro Max, so benchmarks show that the larger phone is a slightly better performer, although in daily use, both are silky smooth in operation.

In terms of power for the price – and power against more mainstream competition – the Poco X8 Pro outdoes itself. It's a flagship experience.

In terms of power for the price – and power against more mainstream competition – the Poco X8 Pro outdoes itself.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Poco X8 Pro: 6,434
Poco X8 Pro Max: 8,032
Samsung Galaxy A37: 3,489
Nothing Phone (4a): 3,339
Apple iPhone 17e: 8,554
Google Pixel 10a: 4,297

PCMark battery test

Poco X8 Pro: 14 hours, 32 minutes
Poco X8 Pro Max: 21 hours, 53 minutes
Samsung Galaxy A37: 13 hours, 36 minutes
Nothing Phone (4a): 17 hours, 23 minutes
Google Pixel 10a: 15 hours, 50 minutes

Charge in 30 minutes

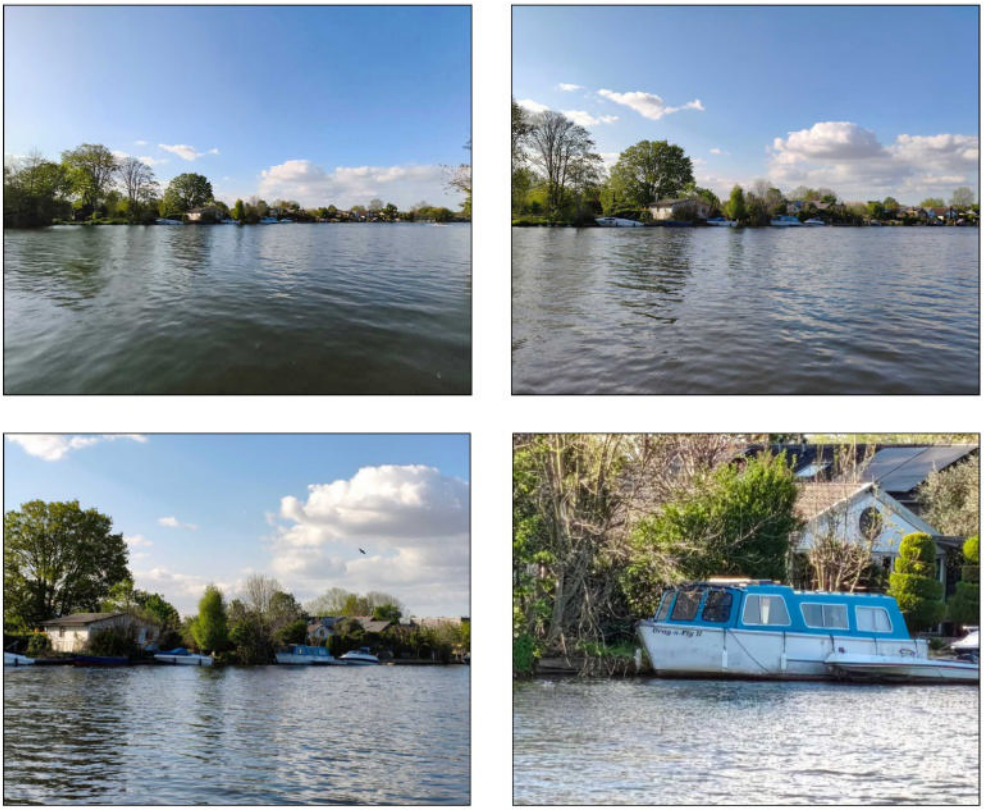
Poco X8 Pro: 80%
Poco X8 Pro Max: 59%
Samsung Galaxy A37: 30%
Nothing Phone (4a): 72%
Google Pixel 10a: 53%

CAMERAS

One of the areas where Poco makes sacrifices to hit the attractive price point is in the camera: the X8 Pro comes with two cameras on the back. I'm glad no junk sensors are bulking the camera up to look like it's a flagship camera, instead offering a decent main camera and an ultrawide that's just about ok.

The main camera is what the X8 Pro is all about, using a Sony IMX882 sensor, which is designed for mid-range phones, though it's the same lens as the X7 Pro and X8 Pro Max. It's reasonable, but not going to win any prizes for its performance.

In good light you'll get nice balanced shots, but it can overexpose in brighter conditions, losing a grip on colour accuracy. The shallow depth of field that comes from that f/1.5 aperture means that getting too close to the subject results in much of it being blurred – there's no accounting for macro focus, here, so you'll either have to step back or use the 2x sensor cropping zoom.

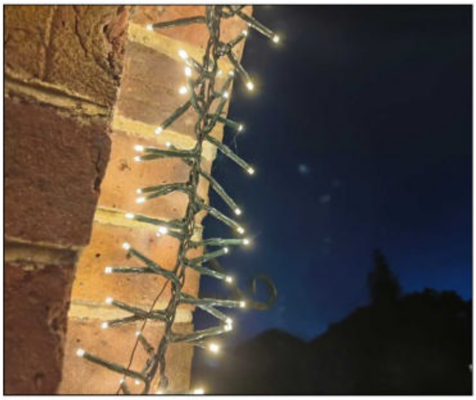


The X8 Pro doesn’t have a telephoto lens. Instead there’s sensor cropping out to 10x, but as you can see here the results aren’t that great.

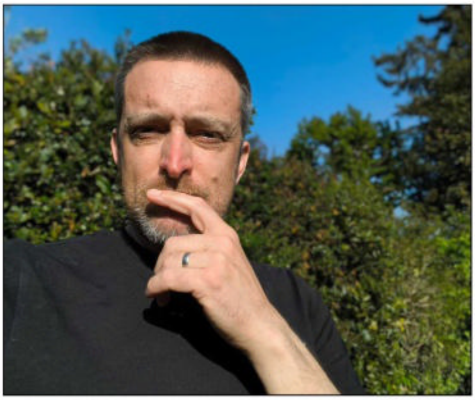
The low light performance – in part thanks to that aperture – is solid. It won’t compete with the Pixel 10a or other top low-light handsets. But it will get the shot, albeit with noise quickly creeping into shadows, even in daylight indoor conditions.

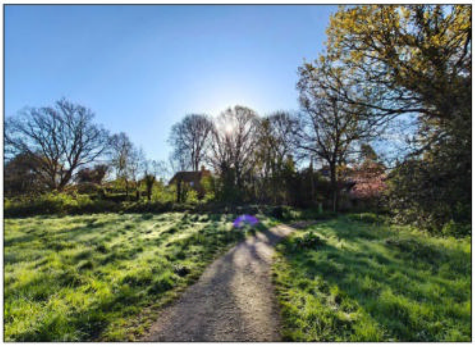
There’s no telephoto lens; instead there’s sensor cropping out to 10x, but the results aren’t that great. If you care about zoom photography, don’t buy the Poco X8 Pro.

The ultrawide lens blurs towards the edges and has a slightly richer colour tone than the main camera, which is likely a result of tuning to make it look better. I found it producing bluer skies and greener grass, as though someone

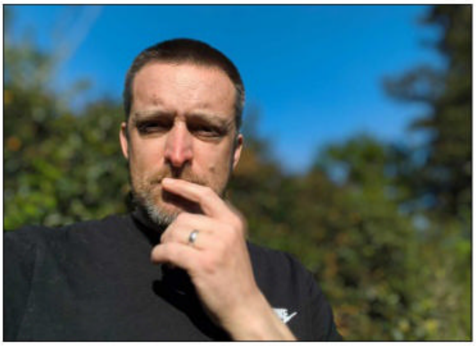


The phone's low light performance is solid.





The ultrawide lens produces bluer skies and greener grass, as though someone had tweaked the saturation dial.



The selfie camera (top) is fine, while the portrait edge detection isn't as sophisticated as more expensive cameras.

had tweaked the saturation dial. It's fixed focus, so anything too close to the lens will be blurred.

The selfie camera is fine, but it's fixed focus again, while the portrait edge detection isn't as sophisticated as more expensive cameras. It's possible to adjust the effect at the time of capture, but the results aren't always great, as seen below. In lower light, it's much less effective, softening and blurring even in indoor photos.

Video capture comes in at up to 4K 60fps, while the front camera will give you 1080p at 60fps. It's decent, but nothing to write home about.

BATTERY LIFE

In line with offering the core functions that people really need in a phone, Poco has equipped the X8 Pro with an impressive 6,500mAh battery and 100-watt charging. That's a very impressive capacity, especially when compared to big hitters such as Google and Samsung.

That plays out in the performance too – battery life is undoubtedly one of the Poco X8 Pro's key strengths. I'm used to charging my phone every night, but I often didn't need to while testing it, as there was still plenty in the tank.

Then there's the incredible advantage of support for 100-watt wired charging – plug it in when you're running low, and you'll be right back to the high percentages in no time at all. I found that in 30 minutes of charging from flat, I got to 80 percent.

75 20%
90W MAX

Battery life is one of the Poco X8 Pro's key strengths.

It's worth noting that you don't get top charging speeds from the off – you'll be asked if you want Boost charging to hit the fastest speeds. This is to preserve battery health, as using the fastest charging will decay the battery faster than more measured charging speeds.

The X8 Pro is generous with its battery, too, supporting up to 27 watts reverse charging, meaning you can top up all manner of devices in a pinch. There's no wireless charging, however.

SOFTWARE & APPS

Sitting on Android 16, the Poco X8 Pro runs HyperOS 3, the same software you'll find on Redmi and Xiaomi phones. The experience of that software is comparable, with the same general strengths and weaknesses.

However, there's some scaling here, as Poco pushes bloatware and adverts more aggressively in its version of HyperOS than Xiaomi does, presumably to offset the lower price.

The result is that the Poco X8 Pro lands with software that's a bit of a challenge, with prompts to install a full run of bloatware apps from the off, that you have to manually untick to avoid. I also found through the setup process that some of those things I unticked were still on the phone.

Sitting on Android 16, the Poco X8 Pro runs HyperOS 3

Much of the bloatware can be uninstalled, and if you're an experienced Xiaomi user, you probably have an established process for turning off and disabling features to avoid the constant interruptions. Mi Browser, for example, will regularly ping up with a notification about apps, news and other things, even if you've never opened Xiaomi's own browser.

HyperOS is a complete reworking of Android, with many of the convenience features you'd find on a Pixel absent. For example, on Pixel phones, when you receive a two-factor authentication message, there's a shortcut to copy the code – on Xiaomi, it's just not there.

The positive side of the equation is that a lot of the changes can be undone and HyperOS can be tamed, because it allows for a lot of customisation. That won't avoid the duplication – there are multiple galleries, browsers, app stores and so on – but with some work the experience gets smoother.

While the support on this phone isn't as long as you'll get from Google or Samsung, it's not bad for a phone at this price, so it's hard to be too critical. However, it's unclear how long we'll be waiting for Xiaomi's version of Android 17 to arrive here.

Xiaomi isn't pushing AI quite as aggressively as rivals such as Motorola, though. I found myself sticking with the built-in Gemini assistant, and it's easy enough to avoid the offers of AI writing, or translation assistance.

VERDICT

The Poco X8 Pro offers great performance for the price, undercutting mainstream rivals with powerful hardware that's more common in phones nearly double the price. It features a solid build, a good display and even reasonable software support. For many people, this phone is a bona fide bargain.

The downside comes in the software experience: the HyperOS experience isn't as smooth as you'll get from big-name rivals like Samsung and Google, meaning it's more work to turn off, remove and calm everything down. Also, the camera experience is a little hit and miss. However, if you don't mind these downsides and you want the best-performing phone at this price point, look no further than the Poco X8 Pro. Chris Hall

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6.59-inch (2,756x1,268; 460ppi) AMOLED, 68B colours, 120Hz, 3,840Hz PWM, Dolby Vision, HDR10+, 3,500 nits (peak) display
- Corning Gorilla Glass 7i, Mohs level 5 screen protection
- Android 16, HyperOS 3
- MediaTek Dimensity 8500 Ultra (4nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 3.4GHz Cortex-A725, 3x 3.2GHz Cortex-A725, 4x 2.2GHz Cortex-A725) CPU
- Mali-G720 GPU
- No card slot
- 8GB/12GB RAM
- 256GB/512GB storage
- Two rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.5, 26mm (wide), 1/1.95", 0.8µm, PDAF, OIS; 8Mp, f/2.2, 15mm (ultrawide), 1/4.0", 1.12µm
- Selfie camera: 20Mp, f/2.2, (wide), 1/4"
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6, dual-band, Wi-Fi Direct
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE , aptX HD, LHDC 5, Auracast, ASHA
- GPS (L1+L5), BDS (B1I+B1c+B2a), GALILEO (E1+E5a), QZSS (L1+L5), NavIC (L5), GLONASS
- NFC
- USB Type-C 2.0, OTG
- Fingerprint (under display, optical)
- Non-removable 6,500mAh battery
- 157.5x75.2x8.4mm
- 201.5g

Motorola Edge 70 Fusion

Price when reviewed: From £369 ★★★★☆

It's hard to think of a simple summary of Motorola's Android offering, with the Razr being the obvious success, especially in the US, where it holds over 50 percent market share according to IDC. With its premium offering now in the Motorola Signature, the Edge line-up has had a bit of a shuffle.

That gave us the Edge 70 as a slimline offering, the Edge 70 Pro at the top and the Edge 70 Fusion in the middle. Whether there will be an Edge 70 Neo remains to be seen. It doesn't end there, with the Edge 70 Fusion distinctly split into two models: one with a 5,200mAh battery – very much like the Edge 60 Fusion – and one with a 7,000mAh battery, which is a lot more exciting. I have been using the Edge 70 Fusion as my main phone for the past few weeks to get a measure of this big battery bargain.

DESIGN

Motorola's design approach is consistent, with its full range of Edge devices having a similar aesthetic. That's been the case for a couple of years, a gradual evolution that sees the Edge 70 Fusion looking slightly more premium than the Edge 60 Fusion.

The camera bump on the back now has a glossy finish, with a chamfered edge to add a little more bling. The design is dominated, however, by the use of Pantone colours and interesting textures. It's not just glass or plastic on the back.

This is one of the most interesting things about Motorola's phones, with the company pitching a fashion angle rather than it just being about industrial design, which is what you get from Samsung.

Motorola's design approach is consistent, with its full range of Edge devices having a similar aesthetic.

The Edge 70 Fusion comes in Pantone Country Air (light blue), Pantone Sporting Green (my favourite), Pantone Orient Blue and finally Pantone Silhouette. That's great, but only the Silhouette is available for the 7,000mAh model.

That means that if you want an interesting colour, you have to buy the smaller battery version, which is very disappointing.

The textures are inspired by nylon and linen, which lend a natural grip to devices and avoid fingerprints. Otherwise, the Edge 70 Fusion curves towards the plastic frame both from the display and the rear, a design that Motorola seems to have offered for a number of years.

There's decent protection for this device, with an IP69 rating against water and dust, as well as MIL-STD 810H drop protection. That's now fairly common on mid-range phones, but great to have at this price.

DISPLAY

The 6.78-inch OLED display is a key highlight of the Edge 70 Fusion. As I said in the design section above, the edges curve towards the frame, a design which is perhaps a little dated and isn't great for gamers because there's a little bit of the screen you can't use.

But it offers a high resolution at 2,772x1,272 pixels (450ppi), along with a refresh rate up to 144Hz. Before you get too excited about that, the highest refresh rate is reserved for compatible games, with normal settings giving you access to 120Hz.

The peak brightness has been pushed to 5,200 nits, which is really bright, although this peak brightness only comes through when viewing HDR content. The phone is listed as supporting HDR10+, although I didn't find support in any streaming apps to test that.

Likely exposure to HDR will come from the camera, with Google's Ultra HDR supported in images, meaning there's an extra boost to bright highlights. In normal use, I found the screen bright enough to still be visible on sunny days. Colours are nice and vibrant – the options to tune the screen to "natural", "radiant" or "vivid" preferences.

In short, the display on the Edge 70 Fusion is excellent and definitely a highlight of this device.

The display on the Edge 70 Fusion is excellent and definitely a highlight of this device.

With Dolby Atmos emblazoned across the top frame of the phone, the stereo speakers have a lot to live up to. The performance is reasonable, with most of the volume coming from the speaker on the base of the phone, with the ear speaker supporting it.

The speakers are fine for gaming and ad hoc video conferencing or movie watching, but easily bettered by connecting headphones. There are additional settings in the menus to tailor the sound slightly, but I found "smart audio" to be the best solution.

PERFORMANCE

One of the upgrades on the Edge 70 Fusion is a move away from MediaTek in favour of the Snapdragon 7s Gen 3. This will be more appealing to many prospective buyers, with the Snapdragon name having a certain cachet for many consumers. However, it's worth noting that this isn't the latest Snapdragon 7s Gen 4, which you'll find in phones such as the Nothing Phone (4a), though there's not a huge difference in perceivable performance between the two.

During testing, day-to-day use was smooth, with my sessions on Call of Duty: Mobile being generally uninterrupted.

The Edge 70 Fusion is only available with 8GB RAM, and I found that it benefited from using the RAM extension function, where I added 12GB to boost the performance. It's worth trying if there are any specific areas where you think the phone is struggling.

I found that day-to-day use was smooth, with my sessions on Call of Duty: Mobile being generally uninterrupted, but the hardware lacks the additional power to really bring the best out of gaming. While it will run smoothly, it puts a bit more of a demand on the phone with some heating towards the top of the device, especially at higher quality settings.

Where previously there was support for microSD storage expansion on Fusion models, that's no longer an option on the Edge 70 Fusion. I also found the Wi-Fi would occasionally drop inexplicably, although it's difficult to know if that's something to do with the device, or just this phone complaining about my home network.

Geekbench 6 (multi-core)

Motorola Edge 70 Fusion: 2,903
Samsung Galaxy A37: 3,489
Nothing Phone (4a): 3,339
Google Pixel 9a: 4,373
Honor Magic 8 Lite: 3,152
Motorola Edge 60 Fusion: 2,947

Charge in 30 minutes

Motorola Edge 70 Fusion: 55%
Samsung Galaxy A37: 30%
Nothing Phone (4a): 72%

Google Pixel 9a: 53%
Honor Magic 8 Lite: 40%
Motorola Edge 60 Fusion: 61%

CAMERAS

The cameras on the Edge 70 Fusion have only really seen one upgrade: a move to the Sony Lytia 710 sensor as the main lens. It's an incremental update, and means that camera performance is largely the same.

In general, you can expect attractive, natural-looking images with decent brightness. However, you can easily apply one of Motorola's filters if you want more saturation and pop.

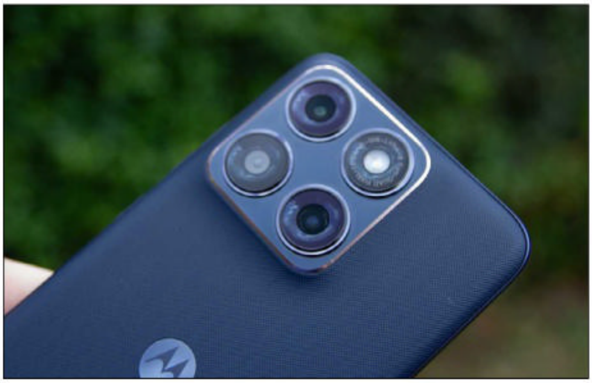
The ultrawide mostly matches the colour tone of the main camera and avoids the worst of the blurring towards the edges, but it is prone to purple fringing. However, it's not always the most consistent, with occasional variation in colours that doesn't make much sense.

On sunny days, I find the ultrawide to be brighter than the main camera. I can only think this is because it uses longer exposures because of its narrower aperture. Sometimes it makes the main camera look a little gloomy, which is the opposite to most phones I've tested.

The main attraction of the ultrawide is the macro camera that it supports, giving you a little more focal depth than the main camera thanks to the f/2.2 focal length. This has a wider depth of field, so focus is improved when you're very close to a subject. It's a better option than dedicated 2Mp macro lenses, that's for sure.

However, there's no telephoto lens here. Although the camera looks like it has three lenses, the third is just a light and exposure sensor to support the main camera. With no optical zoom, you're restricted to 2x cropped shots or up to 10x digital zoom. Of course, the further you stray from the 2x, the worse things look, so I'd avoid it.

The 32Mp front camera works well, with options for close, single-person frames or wider ones for group shots.



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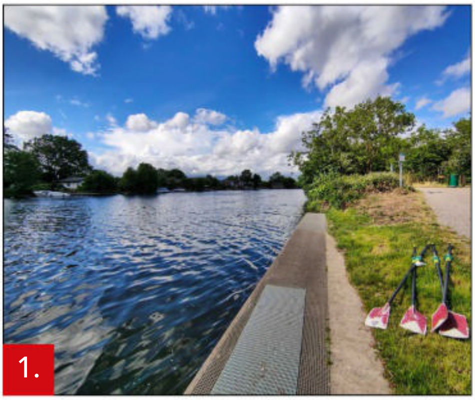
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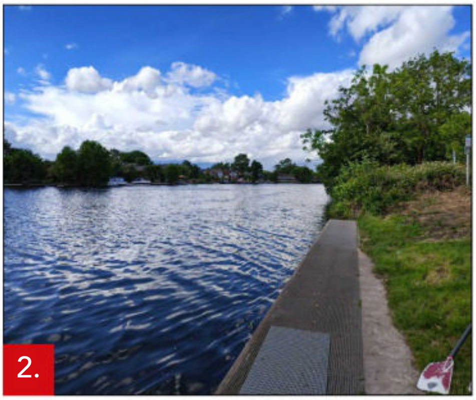
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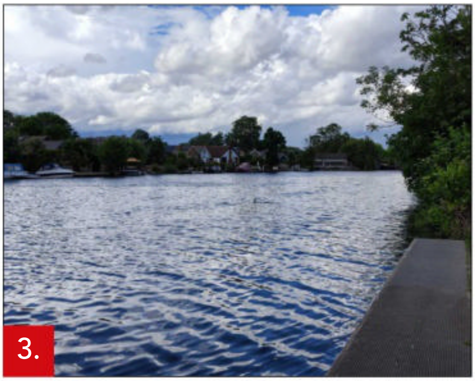
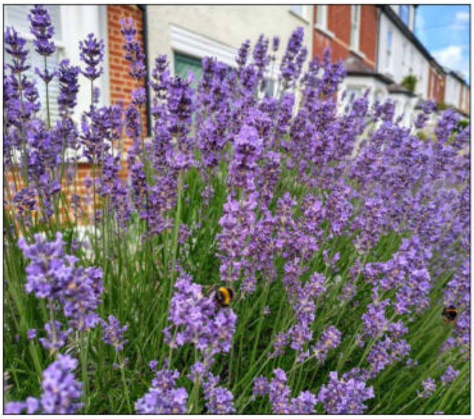
We'll start off our series of test shots, with images of the same scene taken with the 0.5x ultrawide (**1.**), 1x main camera (**2.**) and 2x zoom (**3.**).


3.

Portrait mode doesn't offer the best edge detection I've seen, while it turns on beauty features by default, so that's worth checking before taking your selfies. In bright conditions, the front camera can also overexpose, so that's something to watch out for.

Video is supported up to 4K 30fps and is generally pretty good. There's a horizon lock function to help keep your videos level, but it drops the quality a lot, so unless you're using it in perfect conditions, it's best to avoid it. That's



The main attraction of the ultrawide is its macro shots (see right).

Portrait mode (right) doesn't offer the best edge detection I've seen.

a shame, because it's an impressive feature that's generally very effective.

BATTERY LIFE

The battery life of the Edge 70 Fusion is really exciting. I didn't test the 5200mAh version, but I expect it offers the same sort of solid performance that we got from the Edge 60 Fusion.

The 7,000mAh model, however, is excellent. And best of all, it's only £10 more expensive than the smaller capacity, which feels like great value for money. While the 5,200mAh model is slightly lighter and thinner, I'd take the 7,000mAh version any day of the week.

It delivers realistic two-day battery life, meaning you don't have to worry about charging it every night. When you do come to charge it, there's 68W wired charging, meaning it's a fast top-up too. There's no wireless charging, but given the size of the battery, I'm not bothered about that.

Make no mistake, stellar battery life is the single biggest reason to buy the Edge 70 Fusion over rivals.

SOFTWARE & APPS

I have a bit of an ongoing problem with the direction that Motorola is moving with its software.

While Moto used to be known for the fairly clean Android offering, that's no longer the case. The introduction of Moto AI over the past few years has led to duplication, bloat and changes that don't enhance the experience.

My biggest bugbear is shifting the search box in the app drawer to be an AI box instead, meaning that when you search, it's trying to do too many

Our biggest bugbear is shifting the search box in the app drawer to be an AI box instead.

things. It's so slow that I end up not using it. Motorola also adds a spam-like Newsfeed into the apps tray, which is just clutter – there's already Google Discover on these phones – but you can toggle it off to avoid it.

Moto AI also struggles for purpose and is an example of Moto trying to own part of the software experience. To access it, you need to sign in with a Moto account; if you don't, you'll be prompted to do so any time you interact with anything that's linked to Moto AI.

Moto AI leverages Copilot, Perplexity and Gemini to deliver results, but I'd happily just stick to Gemini and ignore all the Moto AI additions.

Motorola also doesn't miss any opportunity to try to get you to install more apps. These are generally sponsored, but you'll find they are suggested all over parts of the UI – even in the gaming toolbar. You can turn off a lot of the suggestions, but you'll still have to sidestep the prompts to install apps during set-up. This is now a common experience across Motorola devices. With some work, you can tame it and turn a lot of it off, but it takes some digging to get an uncluttered software experience.

While the phone launches on Android 16, there's only three years

Motorola doesn't miss any opportunity to try to get you to install more apps – even in the gaming toolbar.

of operating system updates, but five years of security updates. However, there's no word on when it might get the Android 17 update.

If you keep your phone for a long time, you won't have the latest features, but at least you're mostly secure.

VERDICT

Buy the Motorola Edge 70 Fusion for the long battery life that it offers combined with a great display. This is a phone that will outlast many others in typical use because of the option for a 7,000mAh battery. While the camera isn't wildly exciting, it's good enough for most. And with solid mid-range power, it could be all the phone you need.

There are compromises: the best colours are reserved for the lower capacity phone (which I wouldn't recommend), there's lots of bloatware and software changes that detract from the experience, and the software support can't compete with rivals.

But if you're looking for a big-battery phone on a budget, the Edge 70 Fusion is a fine choice. Chris Hall

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6.78-inch (2,772x1,272; 450ppi) AMOLED, 1B colours, 144Hz, HDR10+, 5,200 nits (peak) display
- Corning Gorilla Glass 7i, Mohs level 4 screen protection
- Android 16, up to 3 major Android upgrades
- Qualcomm SM7635 Snapdragon 7s Gen 3 (4nm) processor
- Octa-core (1x 2.5GHz Cortex-A720, 3x 2.4GHz Cortex-A720, 4 x1.8GHz Cortex-A520) CPU
- Adreno 810 GPU
- No card slot
- 8GB/12GB RAM
- 128GB/256GB/512GB storage
- Two rear-facing cameras: 50Mp, f/1.8, (wide), 1/1.56", 1.0µm, multi-directional PDAF, OIS; 13Mp, f/2.2, 120˚ (ultrawide), 1/3.0", 1.12µm, PDAF
- Selfie camera: 32Mp, f/2.2, (wide), 1/3.14", 0.7µm
- Stereo speakers
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n/ac/6e, dual-band or tri-band
- Bluetooth 6.0, A2DP, LE
- GPS, GLONASS, GALILEO
- NFC
- USB Type-C 2.0, OTG
- Fingerprint (under display, optical)
- Non-removable 5,200mAhor 7,000mAh battery
- 162.76x75.6x7.21mm (5,200mAh battery); 162.76x75.6x7.99mm (7,000mAh battery)
- 177g (5,200mAh battery);193g (7,000mAh battery)

HONOR
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Honor Watch 6

Price when reviewed: From £229 ★★★⯪☆

The Honor Watch 6 is the firm's latest flagship smartwatch, giving you the best it has to offer in wrist-based smarts. That includes up to 35-day battery life, NFC payments and more health and sports features packed into a design made from premium materials.

Honor's smartwatches have often been let down by the software that knits everything together. Case in point, the Honor Watch 5 Ultra. While the Watch 6 has an impressive specs sheet and is available at a price to compete with the likes of the Apple Watch SE and Huawei's GT and Watch Fit series, does it deliver to be considered one of the best mid-range smartwatches to buy?

I've been testing it out on my wrist for the past couple of weeks to find out.

DESIGN

Like Honor's other wearables, the Watch 6 is available in just one size. That's a

46.5mm case, making it bigger than the largest available Google Pixel Watch 4. It's not a smartwatch that screams unisex, measuring in at 10.8mm thick and weighing anywhere from 41g to 50g based on which model you go for.

As you can see below, it looks enormous on my small wrist.

There are just two colour options. The twilight brown version I tested or shadow black. If you prefer a more understated, traditional watch-style look, then that's what the Watch 6 gives you. If you're hoping for something a bit different, there's other smartwatches that will give you that.

Depending on which model you go for, you're getting a predominantly steel design or a combination of aluminium and stainless steel. It ensures that you've got something that feels robust and should handle a bump or two.

Honor places two physical buttons on the side of the case. It's pretty much the button setup you find on most smartwatches. That's a rotating crown at the top that can scroll through menu screens with a flatter button down below that offers quick access to workout tracking out of the box. You can pick it up with either a fluoroelastomer or brown leather strap, which is removable. I'd say that while the leather strap was comfortable to wear and stayed securely in place, it's not a leather strap that screams high quality, either. It costs more, so have a think before you order.

While it looks like a watch that doesn't belong in the water, Honor ensures it can be submerged for a period of time. 5ATM and IP69 waterproof ratings mean you can go for a dip in the sea or the pool. Just make sure you eject the water when prompted when tracking swims.

DISPLAY

The screen you'll be staring down at is a good-sized 1.46-inch, matching

Workout
Workout records
Workout status
Lactate

The Watch 6 looks enormous on our reviewer's small wrist.

the large size of the watch case. It's an AMOLED panel with a crisp 464x464 resolution. The Honor Watch 6 offers rich colours and with a peak brightness of 3,000 nits, it can go as bright as some of the brightest smartwatches. There is some black bezel around the screen to contend with, which thankfully doesn't eat too much into the display.

You have the ability to make phone calls over Bluetooth with the onboard speaker, also letting you play loaded music out loud. In both scenarios, the Watch 6 offers plenty of volume to help in louder environments. The call quality and clarity are strong, ensuring those on the other end don't sound like a muffled mess.

SOFTWARE & FEATURES

The Watch 6 works with both Android phones and iPhones and runs on Honor's MagicOS operating system. You need to download the Honor Health app to set things up, which unsurprisingly shares a lot of the same user interface traits as Huawei's Health app. That's because Honor used to be part of Huawei.

That extends to the watch software, which is easy to get around and has the feel of Huawei's LiteOS operating system. You've got nice big widgets that fill the watch screen, a place to view phone notifications and support for animations when you've hit an activity tracking milestone or use one of the animated watch faces.

My watch has been a bit buggy in testing, with the screen turning itself off randomly or disconnecting from the app, but in general, it's been a stress-free watch to use.

The watch faces available aren't the most memorable bunch to pick from. There's a mix of analogue and digital-style ones, with each indicating how power hungry they'll be if you choose to use them. I just wish there were a few that really stood out.

Outside of the smartwatch features norm, the Watch 6

Hillingdon
20°C
22°C / 12°C
Excellent 18
Updated 15:09

There are nice big widgets that fill the watch screen.

features NFC to enable contactless payments via Mastercard specifically. However, this feature wasn't turned on or available during my testing.

There are some extras like a voice recorder that can generate summaries using AI, plus the ability to pair two phones at the same time to receive notifications from both smartphones.

Checkup report
06/10 17:32
No abnormalities
4 checks, no abnormalities
Average heart rate

You can track your heart rate, SpO2 levels and perform a 60-second measurement to measure multiple health data points at the same time.

FITNESS & TRACKING

Honor throws a lot in here as far as health and fitness features are concerned. On the health front, there isn't anything that carries any sort of regulatory-level approval. If you're in Europe, you miss out on the new dynamic blood pressure monitoring.

What you can do is track your heart rate, SpO2 levels and perform a 60-second measurement to measure multiple health data points at the same time. Honor can offer recommendations based on that data, like suggesting going for a walk based if metrics suggest you've not been very active.

You're getting access to 122 sports modes and that now includes richer support for football and badminton, with an AI-powered running coach now at your disposal.

Though I'd say this AI coach was a bit more basic than others I've come across on other smartwatches. Outdoor tracking is boosted by the inclusion of dual-band GPS, giving you the latest in advanced GPS positioning technology – in theory, anyway, more on this below.

As an activity tracker, I found daily step count totals far off two reliable trackers I wore alongside it. It could be as many as 1,000- to 2,000 steps more. It performed much better as a sleep tracker, where it recorded similar core stats like time slept and sleep stages compared to two other sleep trackers.

If you care about heart rate tracking, the daily heart rate ranges recorded felt a little off. Especially with the wildly high maximum readings recorded during the day. I saw more reliable data for on-the-spot measurements and during steady-paced exercise sessions.

I used the Watch 6 for a range of workouts, including runs, indoor rides, rows and pool swims and in general, I found the tracking to be fine. I didn't get the excellent dual-band GPS performance I have experienced on other dual-band watches. Especially ones from Apple and Garmin.

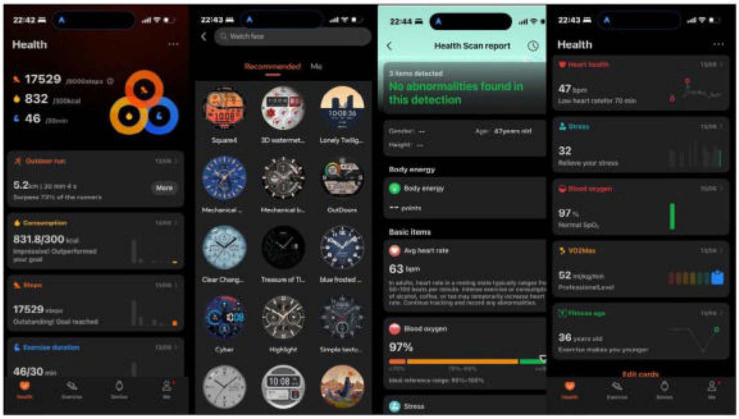
There are additional workout-related features to tap into here, like the ability to perform lactate threshold tests to assess fitness levels. You can see how your fitness age changes (or doesn't) based on logged workouts and check your latest VO2 Max estimate. Given the mixed accuracy shown by the onboard sensors, I saw these insights more as prompts as opposed to being definitive guidance on how and when you should train.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

The Honor Watch 6 has an impressive 980mAh capacity battery that Honor says can max out at up to 35 days. That is the maximum battery life if you're willing to forgo using a lot of its features like continuous health monitoring, keeping the screen nice and bright or streaming music on a regular basis.

A more accurate number is that it can get to around 17 days when using its smartwatch features more regularly, but that's still one of the best of any smartwatch, especially when so many still only offer one or two days.

I found the Watch 6 could comfortably last a week and had the capability to go for another. I did have to eventually put the power saving mode into play and that did push things further without having to ditch features like viewing



The Honor Watch 6's health app.

notifications or still tracking workouts.

When you do need to charge it, there's a proprietary charging cradle to do that. I found it could take a good couple of hours to charge it. I've definitely seen snappier charging smartwatches in and around the same price as the Watch 6.

Workout
Workout records
Workout status
Lactate

The Honor Watch 6 does a perfectly reasonable job as a smartwatch.

VERDICT

The Honor Watch 6 does a perfectly reasonable job as a smartwatch, whether you're an iPhone or Android user. It feels well-made, the software runs pretty well and there are plenty of features to use. It's just not a smartwatch that I put on and feel Honor had made something special. I think you do get that feeling with smartwatches like the Huawei Watch Fit 5 Pro or the Apple Watch SE 3. When you compare the Watch 6 to watches like those, it shows you what's capable. Yes, there are some characteristics that make the Watch 6 a better watch to live with, especially battery life. However, when you look at the entire experience, those rival watches and others in the same price bracket just offer a more complete package. Mike Sawh

SPECIFICATIONS

- 1.46-inch (464x464; 317ppi) AMOLED, 3,000 nits (peak) display
- MagicOS
- No card slot
- 4GB RAM
- Loud speaker
- No 3.5mm audio jack
- No WLAN
- Bluetooth 5.4, LE, EDR
- GPS (L1+L5), BDS, GALILEO, QZSS, GLONASS
- NFC
- Sensors: Accelerometer, gyro, compass, barometer, heart rate, SpO2
- Non-removable 980mAh battery
- 46.5x46.5x10.8m
- 41g/50g

TECH ADVISOR
EDITORS' CHOICE

Ultrahuman Ring Pro

Price when reviewed: From £429 ★★★★☆

The Ultrahuman Ring Pro is the latest smart ring from a company that's been at loggerheads with Oura. After sales of its previous ring were temporarily banned in the US, Ultrahuman has returned with a new ring featuring redesigned sensors, improved processor performance and longer battery life.

The Ring Air remains on sale as a more affordable alternative to the Pro, but if you want the best Ultrahuman has to offer, this is the one to go for. Unfortunately, like fellow subscription-free rival RingConn, the price of Ultrahuman's rings have crept up, meaning that the Pro needs to really excel to be worthy of that bigger spend and make it a top smart ring pick.

DESIGN

The Ring Pro is a smart ring with a clean look that comes in four different colours: bionic gold, space silver, aster black and raw titanium. The core of the ring is made from titanium with a PVD coating to protect it from scratches. I've found that previous Ultrahuman rings have been some of the easiest to scratch so I'm happy to see that the Pro does a better job of fending them off.

Like the Air, the Pro comes in ring sizes 5- to 14 and remains waterproof in depths of up to 100 metres. I opted for the same size as the Air, and the sizing appears to be similar, if not a bit better fitting overall, with fewer instances of the ring rolling around my finger. It's pretty comfortable and snug to wear. While you can feel the sensor array, it's not as noticeable as previous rings.

You are getting a heavier and thicker ring compared to Ultrahuman's Ring Air. Having worn the Oura Ring 5 at the same time, the Pro looks notably bigger than Oura's latest ring.

The Pro ships with a charging case, and while you wouldn't mistake it for Oura's new case, it has a similar robust metal design protecting the ring when it's not on your finger. The case packs additional smarts like wireless charging, a 'find my case' mode for when you misplace it, not to mention the ability to store ring data for up to a year.

One interesting thing to note about the design is that Ultrahuman has made it so that, in the event of swelling, the ring can be easily cut and removed. Although it's something I hope no one ever has to endure, it is reassuring to know that the ring can be removed easily in an emergency situation.

FITNESS & TRACKING

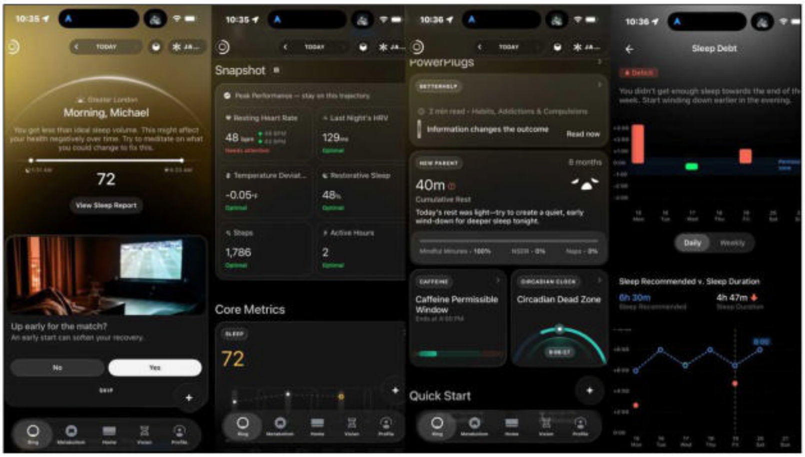
The Ring Pro can monitor pretty much everything the Air can. That includes heart rate, sleep, stress, temperature and daily step counts. The biggest change is that the optical sensors used

The Ring Pro is a smart ring with a clean look.

The ring's optical sensors used to generate these metrics have been redesigned.

to generate these metrics have been redesigned, providing clearer signals to capture sleep and recovery data. This redesign also seems to be tied to the patent disputes with Oura.

The app that presents this data is one of the most polished you'll find attached to a smart ring. It's up there with Oura's app for treating your data in a way that's enticing, encouraging you to actually engage with it.


Morning, Michael
72
View Sleep Report
Up early for the match?
No
Yes
Snapshot
Resting Heart Rate
Last Night's HRV
Temperature Deviation
Restorative Sleep
Steps
Active Hours
Core Metrics
PowerPlugs
Information changes the outcome
Read now
Caffeine Permissible Window
Circadian Dead Zone
Quick Start
Sleep Debt
Daily
Weekly
Sleep Recommended v. Sleep Duration

The app is one of the best you'll find attached to a smart ring.

Looking at the core data tracking, you really need to get through the two-week calibration until you get something reliable. Data from average heart rate readings were way off during that period, but settled down after those two weeks. Resting heart rate data and heart rate variability measurements particularly chimed well with two other trackers I wore alongside the Pro.

Delving into step counts, I found step totals reported were noticeably lower than two other trackers I tested the Pro with. The sleep tracking performance is up there with some of the best I've tested, including Oura. Looking at sleep duration, sleep stage breakdowns and the time captured when I'd fallen asleep, the Pro dished out reliable stats.

The charging case has the capacity to give you another 45 days of battery life.

Where Ultrahuman seeks to do things differently from the competition is in how it presents convoluted data in a digestible format, like assessing brain age or tracking sleep debt you're carrying from cumulative bad nights of sleep. It also monitors how well you're clearing brain waste during sleep. You can also explore Ultrahuman's PowerPlugs, which are mostly free add-ons to offer more personalised tracking. I've been using the new parent one, which pays close attention to cumulative rest, acknowledging that sleep is likely to be more broken and prompting you on how to get things back on track.

Most of these PowerPlugs are free, as mentioned. There are ones such as those that present migraine insights or sync data to a Tesla, which do require a monthly subscription. These are paid elements that most will be able to live without.

BATTERY LIFE

Battery life is a big story for the Pro and not just for the fact that it can go longer than the Air. Along with upping the battery from 4- to 6 days to 15 days, you have three battery modes to help you make the most of each charge.

If you choose the Turbo mode, which turns on all sensors, you can expect up to 12 days. That jumps to over 15 days when you opt for the Chill battery mode. This shifts the focus to sleep tracking, but will still capture vital moments in your day to make sure key insights still provide value. I've comfortably managed to get almost two weeks of battery from the Pro, which is a strong showing. That's better than the Oura Ring 5 and up there with the RingConn Gen 2 in terms of battery performance.

You do now also have that charging case, which has the capacity to give you

The Ring Pro offers a combination of hardware and software that amounts to an excellent overall package.

another 45 days of battery life. You do have to be precise about the placement of the ring inside the charger, where an audio cue from the built-in speaker confirms that it's powering the ring back up. When I hit 0 percent, the Pro comfortably took less than an hour to get back to 100 percent.

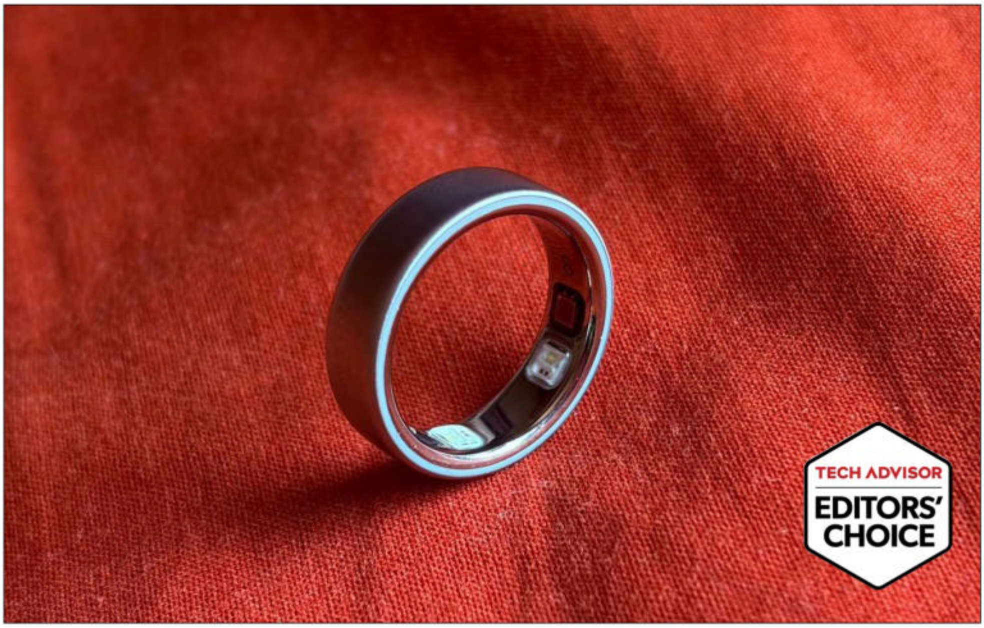
VERDICT

The big improvements with the Ring Pro over the Air lie with that larger battery and more durable design. I never found the monitoring performance on the Air to be lacking, and if you can still get hold of one and you're a fan of the Ultrahuman software approach, then it's still a smart (and more affordable) buy.

If you compare the Ring Pro to other smart rings, we do have to talk about price. It's expensive and you can find subscription-free alternatives for less. Whether they'll give you the same level of care and attention on the software side is up for debate. That's really where the Ring Pro wins against much of the competition. It might not be the smallest ring or the thinnest, but what the Ring Pro does have is a combination of hardware and software that amounts to an excellent overall package. Mike Sawh

SPECIFICATIONS

- Materials: Titanium, PVD Coating, Epoxy, Polycarbonate
- Inner surface: Hypoallergenic plastic, Titanium
- Dual-core with on-chip machine learning
- Bluetooth Low Energy, EMF-safe
- Sensors: Heart rate, temperature, redesigned PPG, 6-axis IMU
- Up to 15 days battery life
- 100m water resistance
- Thickness: 2.65mm
- Sizes: 5 to 14
- 3.3- to 4.8g



Oura Ring 5

Price when reviewed: From £399 ★★★★⯪

The Oura Ring 5 is a surprise update to the best smart ring in the business. While rumours pointed to new hardware in late 2027, Oura surprised everyone by launching its new model over a year earlier.

For the Ring 5, the objective is clear. To take its smart ring hardware and make it even smaller, all without making compromises on performance, including battery life.

I've been a long-term user of the Oura Ring and have tested pretty much all of its rivals, too. Is there more to the Oura Ring 5 than just a smaller design? I've been wearing one for almost a month to find out.

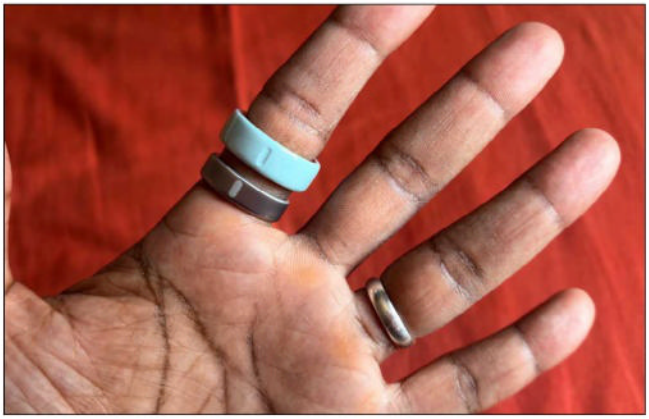
DESIGN

The headline story here is that the Oura Ring 5 is smaller than Oura Ring 4. It's 40 percent smaller, so we're not just talking a little bit and it's even more if you compare it to the chunky Oura Ring 4 Ceramic Edition.

Smaller also equals lighter, so it's gone from 3.3- to 5.2g (depending on what size you need) down to just 2g for the lightest Ring 5. It's gone from a ring with a width of 7.9mm to one that measures in at 6.09mm thick, so it's slimmer for starters.

I put the 5 next to the standard and ceramic versions of the Oura Ring 4, as well as a host of other smart rings. You can instantly appreciate just how the Ring 5 dominates less on your hand than previous rings and the competition.

Despite the notable drop in stature, my ring size remained the same as previous Ouras. I still managed to get a good fit that didn't roll around too much on my finger.



The Oura Ring 5 versus Ring 4 Ceramic Edition.

It's a ring that remains made out of titanium, so you're getting something that's light yet durable. There's only a titanium model at the moment, so those hoping for a ceramic Oura Ring 5 are out of luck for now – but one could launch in the future.

Oura says it's using a harder PVD coating to improve the ring's scratch resistance. I've been wearing it for a few weeks, and while it's not been immune to scuffs, it hasn't been littered with them. The ceramic Ring 4 is still the best choice for avoiding marks.

In terms of colours and sizes, there are six colours to choose from. I tested the brushed silver, which is a more muted silver look than the previous silver Oura Ring. I think it helps to give it an understated yet still elegant look.

Other colours include black and silver (which are the cheaper option) or gold, stealth (matt black) and the brand-new Deep Rose, which has a sort of copper look. Sizes go from 6-13, which is a difference in the sizing available for the Ring 4.

Like previous rings, you can order a free sizing kit to ensure you get the best fit for tracking.

We tested the brushed silver version, which is a more muted silver look than the previous silver Oura Ring.

While Oura introduced a charging case for the Ring 4, the Ring 5 still ships with just the dock-style charger. The charging case may well be worth the extra £99 so you can charge the device up to five times, no matter where you are, but it must be the new model and the correct size for your ring.

FITNESS & TRACKING

At its core, the Ring 5's hardware and what it uses to monitor your metrics haven't actually changed. On the ring's interior, you'll find 2 photodetector sensors, two sets of triple LEDs, a temperature sensor and an accelerometer to capture movement and recognise sleep.

These all enable the Ring 5 to measure information including steps, exercise, heart rate, sleep, stress and power Oura's key readiness and resilience metrics. Those same sensors have been redesigned with the promise to improve accuracy compared to the Ring 4 in some departments.

Data lives inside the Oura companion app, which remains the class-leader in smart rings for presenting a growing amount of data and insights in an engaging way. You can access some features for free, but you still need to pay the monthly or annual subscription to make owning the device worthwhile.

It also has useful integrations, including Strava, Headspace and Clue. These help to fill the gaps for the features the Oura can't offer, which isn't a particular strength for the Oura ecosystem. The main Today screen is where you'll get updates on your daily readiness scores or see a reminder of the time you should be preparing to get into bed. Hit the dropdown menu and there's a lot more to find. Like logging meals or using the symptom radar.

New software features like Health Radar are rolling out to US users first. This feature builds on Oura's Symptom Radar to detect early signs of getting sick. Blood pressure signals will be rolling out to specific territories as well. While you won't be able to take a blood pressure reading on your Oura, it will keep track of trends in your cardiovascular-related patterns from data collected by its optical sensors during the night.

These are software features that will be offered to both Oura Ring 5 and Oura Ring 4 users so on this side of things, existing owners may not feel the need to upgrade.

For tracking daily steps, the Oura does a solid job. I've been wearing it with two other trackers during the day and daily step count totals were very close on most days.

In terms of improved heart rate tracking, you should see a bit of a boost for exercise heart rate and recovery-based tracking during sleep monitoring. Looking at heart rate, ranges during sleep were similar to the solid sleep heart rate tracking on a Garmin and another smart ring I wore alongside it. It was a similar story for daytime averages.

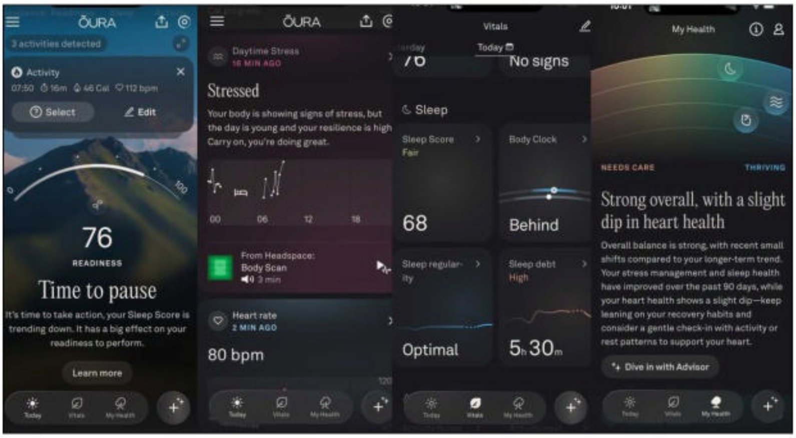
In terms of tracking heart rate during exercise, this has always been problematic for smart rings in general and not just Oura. Simply because the ring can have a habit of moving around when you sweat and move. I would still say that heart rate tracking during exercise isn't a strength for Oura.

It has come up with a solution to improve things. Now you can share the live heart rate data from another wearable. That does, of course, mean you'll need to own another device, but if you already have one, then you can get to that better workout data.

Then there's sleep, which has been one of Oura's strengths. It's not just because it's a very comfortable ring to take to bed with you, even more so with the Ring 5. Along with sleep scores, you get sleep summaries, a more detailed breakdown of sleep and core metrics like sleep stages and duration.

Those insights looked good, particularly for capturing the time I'd fallen asleep and also posting similar times spent in REM and deep sleep stages. Oura also shows you how well you're doing when catching up on your sleep debt and how aligned you are with your natural body clock.

Many of these metrics power Oura's key readiness and resilience insights. The former has been adopted by other wearable makers under similar


ŌURA
3 activities detected
Activity
07:50 16m 46 Cal 112 bpm
Select
Edit
0
100
76
READINESS
Time to pause
Learn more
Today
Vitals
My Health
ŌURA
Daytime Stress
16 MIN AGO
Stressed
00
06
12
18
From Headspace:
Body Scan
3 min
Heart rate
2 MIN AGO
80 bpm
120
Vitals
Today
76
No signs
Sleep
Sleep Score
Fair
68
Body Clock
Behind
Sleep regularity
Optimal
Sleep debt
High
5h 30m
My Health
NEEDS CARE
THRIVING
Strong overall, with a slight dip in heart health
Dive in with Advisor

It's time to take action, your Sleep Score is trending down. It has a big effect on your readiness to perform.

Your body is showing signs of stress, but the day is young and your resilience is high Carry on, you're doing great.

Overall balance is strong, with recent small shifts compared to your longer-term trend. Your stress management and sleep health have improved over the past 90 days, while your heart health shows a slight dip—keep leaning on your recovery habits and consider a gentle check-in with activity or rest patterns to support your heart.

Data lives inside the Oura companion app, which remains the class-leader in smart rings.

or different names. Readiness wants to simply tell you if you've got enough in the tank to take on a busy day. I've been comparing readiness scores to a Garmin and Ultrahuman's similar insights and they were scoring me within a few points of the Oura.

Resilience insights relate to understanding your ability to recover from physically demanding or stressful periods of your week. This looks at your recovery during the night, day, as well as stress load throughout that day. You'll then be told you have a strong resilience to those stresses or are struggling to bounce back.

You'll find additional guidance as well as prompts to help you manage that stressful period of your week. I find the readiness insights easier to put into action than the resilience ones. If you're more focused on stress, then this is a feature more geared towards you.

BATTERY LIFE & CHARGING

Despite the drop in size, Oura says the Ring 5 doesn't see a drop in battery life. It states that the Ring 5 can last anywhere from 6- to 9 days. That's in contrast to the 5- to 8 days quoted for the Our Ring 4.

Oura says it rejigged the design and used software to optimise the battery performance. Much like previous rings, if you're not using the more power-hungry blood oxygen sensing, this ring is capable of lasting a week.

As far as being the best smart ring battery life on offer, that's still short of the best. Both RingConn Gen 2 and Ultrahuman's latest rings can last longer, but the Ring 5 should last long enough for most people.

The charging dock can take over an hour to get you from 0- to 100 percent battery.

Charging the Ring remains the same. It's the same-style charging dock that can take over an hour to get you from 0- to 100 percent battery. If you want a more convenient and travel-friendly way to charge the Ring 5, you'll need to spend more on the charging case, which, like the ring, isn't cheap at £99.

VERDICT

If you already have an Oura Ring 4 and you're happy with the size and how it looks and performs – ceramic or regular – then you probably don't need the Oura Ring 5. Especially as the new software features will be available to the Ring 4. If you've been holding out for a smaller, more discreet Oura, then that is what the Ring 5 gets you. Along with access to the same features and potentially longer battery life (if you are OK with the subscription cost).

The hardware and software package still make the Oura Ring the model to beat. While the likes of Ultrahuman and newcomers like Leep Ring 1 have shown that great software exists outside of Oura, the hardware simply isn't as stylish to wear.

I've enjoyed using the Oura Ring 5 and I think the new smaller design will likely lure more people to buy a smart ring in spite of that subscription. I'd also be content with going back to my ceramic Oura Ring 4. It just shows that Oura now has two strong ring options where you don't feel like you're missing out on big software updates by spending less. Mike Sawh

SPECIFICATIONS

- Titanium exterior
- Inner surface: Titanium
- Bluetooth Low Energy, EMF-safe
- Sensors: Accelerometer, oxygen levels, temperature, heart rate, respiration
- Battery life: 6 to 9 days
- 100m water resistance
- IP68 rated for water and dust
- Thickness: 2.28mm (varies by size)
- Width: 6.09mm
- From 2g

Credit: Samsung

Best foldable smartphones

Flips and folds of all types and prices. ANYRON COPEMAN reports

Although there's a lot to love about traditional, candy bar-style smartphones, their foldable siblings, which carry a larger screen hidden away, feel like they're in a league of their own. For certain use cases like working and multitasking, to lining up the perfect selfie, foldables are the better pick for the job, and thanks to the hard work of our expert team, we know which foldables are the best to buy.

Foldables have come a long way since their inception – gone are the days of flimsy hinges that wouldn't hold up to scrutiny, replaced instead with far sturdier builds that can withstand almost as much as non-foldable phones. If you're tempted to take the plunge and see what all the fuss is about, then this guide can pair you with the right fold or flip phone to suit your needs.

When it comes to choosing a foldable phone in 2026, there are four form factors to choose from, each built with a specific use case in mind. Flip phones, like the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip line, are ideal for taking selfies and video, as the bottom half of the phone can act like a stand. Their smaller external screens, by design, promote a more mindful approach to using your phone as you can access key apps quickly without falling into a pattern of doomscrolling.

Book-style foldables, on the other hand, can be found in both tall and squat varieties, with the Z Fold7 and the Huawei Pura X Max being great examples of the former and latter, respectively. Taller foldables are perfect for multitasking, as you can have two apps open side by side on their internal screens, so productivity users will get on well here. The more squat variety (which is also rumoured to be used for the upcoming iPhone Ultra) is better suited for entertainment, as the internal display takes on a wider format that feels more natural for streaming and gaming.

There are also trifolding folds, such as the Samsung Galaxy Z Trifold, but this is still quite a niche form factor and hasn't made its way to the mainstream yet. We imagine that more brands will hop on the bandwagon down the line.

No matter which type takes your fancy, our experts have put in the work to make sure that you don't spend your hard-earned cash on a dud. With that in mind, here are the latest foldables that we recommend above all others.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST FOLDABLE PHONE

Unlike the process of picking the best candy-bar style phone for your needs, foldable phones have quite a few extra considerations in mind. Thankfully, we're now at a point where durability, across the board, is at a fairly high standard but it's still worth keeping an eye on the IP rating of a foldable phone in question.

If you see an official IP68 or IP69 rating then you can rest assured that the phone will be well protected from water and dust as you go about your day.

Beyond durability, battery life is an absolutely crucial component. Given that foldable phones often have to power screens that are much larger than the norm, there's going to be an obvious knock on longevity.

Our battery tests provide the best information possible for understanding exactly how long you can use a foldable phone for until it needs a

Samsung offers very good customer service and offers a screen protector replacement within warranty.

top-up, and how long the charging process takes thereafter.

Battery life and durability are the most crucial features when it comes to foldable phones, but once you're satisfied with the results on hand, it's worth seeing how well optimised the software is to handle the foldable format.

This is particularly important if you want to use the phone for productivity, as it'll determine whether the multitasking experience is a smooth one or not. At present, OnePlus leads the charge with its Open Canvas software, but the other brands aren't far behind thanks to constant software tweaks.

Of course, if you are planning to use a flip or foldable phone for content creation, with the larger display being a boon for editing, then you'll need a good set of cameras.

Unfortunately, cameras are the one area that don't quite match traditional candy-bar phones on quality, but the likes of Samsung and Honor continue to raise the bar with each iteration. This is why it's important to check our camera results in each review, as we show you exactly how the sensors perform in everyday situations.

FAQ

1. Build quality

One thing to note is that foldable phones are more fragile than their candy bar-style cousins. They have screens that are a flexible composite of glass and plastic, and the technology is quite new. We've seen creases in screens crack and break, and have had the factory-applied screen protectors peel away at the crease.

Samsung, in particular, is wary of this. If you live in Europe, the company offers very good customer service and offers a screen protector replacement within warranty. Repairs outside of warranty are also reasonably priced and you can either send away your phone or go in-store to book an appointment for a repair.

Other brands have less support out there, so check before you buy if you are worried.

2. Water protection

One question that's often asked is how waterproof are foldable phones? The simple answer is that some are, and some aren't. Samsung's newer foldables, the latest Motorola Razr models, and a few select others are fully waterproof – but you won't want to take an Oppo or Honor folding phone out in the pouring rain. Check the tech specs before you buy.

3. Foldable iPhone

At the time of writing, Apple hasn't announced a foldable iPhone, though there probably will be at some point. Apple has a track record of adopting new technologies a little later than market rivals, but then tends to do a better job, or at least release a product that is fully realised rather than feeling like a prototype.

Samsung may have matured its foldable line-up now, but the original Galaxy Fold in 2019 was so flawed that the company had to recall it initially.

4. Imported foldables

Because a lot of foldable phones haven't had global releases, you might be tempted to import them.

But if a phone has only been released in China, it'll probably have Chinese-oriented software and may not come with the Google Play Store installed. You'll be able to get Google apps on there, but it will be a bit of a faff. Importing a foldable also means you will lose out on in-country support for warranty claims or repairs.

If you are desperate for a folding phone but your favoured model isn't available in the UK, it'd be better to import a phone with Google services.

1. BEST OVERALL

Motorola Razr Fold

Price when reviewed: £1,799

Pros: Appealingly tactile design; strong camera set-up; big, bright screens; good battery life and fast charging

Cons: Relatively bulky; stylus could be better implemented; performance isn't cutting-edge

Although great strides have been made to ensure that book-style foldables are slimmer than ever, if you don't mind sacrificing some of that progress for a slightly bulkier phone, you'll get plenty in return with the outstanding Motorola

Motorola's first foldable phone in the book-style gives the competition a run for its money.

Ever since the Motorola Signature, the brand has shown itself as a force to be reckoned with in this arena, and that continues with the Razr Fold as we captured stunning photos in low-light scenes and during the daytime. There's a sizeable 6,000mAh battery to back up all the picture-taking you'll be doing with this Razr Fold. Given that this is Motorola's first foldable phone in the book-style (despite Razr introducing the modern flip phone), it's impressive to see just how much the brand has learned from the competition to give them a serious run for their money.

For starters, with a price tag of £1,799 and with 512GB storage by default, the Razr Fold massively undercuts Samsung's latest foldable, especially since it's had a price increase since launch, but it also boasts some of the best cameras we've seen on a foldable. It's a triple threat on the back, with three 50Mp cameras including a 3x telephoto lens for zoom photography.

phone, and there's super speedy 80W wired charging too which outdoes the previous king in this area, the Honor Magic V5. There's even 50-watt wireless charging that you can rely on in a pinch.

It also has brilliantly bright screens and comes with a stylus, unlike rivals, even though it does come in a separate holster.

The only area where the Razr Fold can't quite match the expectations you'd likely have from a phone of this price is in performance. Instead of the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 chipset, which currently powers most Android flagships, Motorola has bestowed the Razr Fold with the lesser-powered

Snapdragon 8 Gen 5. Still, it's a minor blip on an all-round excellent foldable.

Target audience: Foldable fans who want an excellent value book-style phone.

Further considerations: Look elsewhere for the top performance or a more svelte design.

2. RUNNER-UP BOOK-STYLE FOLDABLE

Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7

Price when reviewed: £1,799
Pros: Incredibly slim and lightweight; upgraded cameras; less noticeable crease; excellent software
Cons: No S Pen support; no battery or charging upgrades; can throttle while gaming

Samsung may have been the first company to really go all-in on the book-style foldable concept, but we'd argue that the Galaxy Z Fold7 represents the first time the manufacturer has been able to truly deliver on the idea of having a large, tablet-like device that can fit in your pocket. As great as previous Galaxy Z Folds have been, the Fold7 is just so slim that it's almost on a whole other level.

When opened up, the Z Fold7 is only 4.2mm thick, but it's the fact that it's 8.9mm thick when folded that makes all the difference. We are finally at that point where keeping a foldable phone on your person doesn't feel all that different to having a traditional candy-bar style smartphone in your pocket, and that's a huge win.

Galaxy Z Fold7 delivers on the idea of having a large, tablet-like device that can fit in your pocket.

Even with the slimmer frame, Samsung has made sure to invest just as much time with the durability of the whole thing, moving the Z Fold7 over to the more robust Advanced Armor Aluminium for the chassis, and Gorilla Glass Ceramic 2 for the display. Given that you're getting seven years of updates with the phone, it's nice to know that it can go the distance.

Cameras have been a bit hit-and-miss on previous Fold phones but there's more good news to be found here too. There are still three rear-facing sensors but now they're led by the massively upgraded 200Mp main camera (the same one from the S25 Ultra) and it's able to capture jaw-dropping shots with plenty of colour.

The Honor Magic V6 is an amazing device that's well worth your attention.

Target audience: Those who want the perfect combination of style, software, cameras and support in one foldable phone.

Further considerations: It's still one of the priciest phones out there, and there's no shortage of cheaper alternatives either. The Z Fold 8 is likely to arrive in July 2026.

3. BEST SLIM BOOK-STYLE FOLDABLE

Honor Magic V6

Price when reviewed: £1,999
Pros: Lovely slim design; big bright displays; superb cameras; cool software features
Cons: Pricey; MagicOS can be frustrating at times

The Honor Magic V5 felt like the wake-up call that the wider foldables industry needed in order to see what could be done with the form factor. It was slim, had a genuine multi-day battery life under the right conditions and it also packed a camera system that didn't feel inferior on the flagship stage. The phone set a mighty high bar to cross, and although things haven't changed too much in its successor, the Honor Magic V6 is still an amazing device that's well worth your attention.

What wows us even now is how slim the V6 is, honestly feeling like a regular phone when stowed away in your pocket. When closed, the phone is just 8.75mm thick when folded, and 4mm thin when unfolded (this jumps ever so slightly to 9mm and 4.1mm respectively for the non-white models). It's a stunning piece of engineering, and it's now more durable than before with an official IP69 certification for better water and dust resistance.

Honor phones always excel when it comes to their displays, and that's no different here. The outer display has now moved up to a higher 6,000 nits of brightness which is simply dazzling to the eyes when out and about, and it makes the process of lining up a shot in broad daylight so much easier. The internal 7.95-inch display is capped at 5,000 nits, but it's still wonderful to look at, and it's the perfect size for side-by-side multitasking for productivity users.

The new Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 chipset also helps with making sure that power users have all they need to avoid any sense of slowdown, and that means that high-end games run well here too. What holds the phone back from trouncing the likes of Motorola and Samsung is the lacklustre nature of Honor's MagicOS overlay, which is just a bit too cumbersome for our liking. Still, for all that you get elsewhere, it's easy enough to adapt to MagicOS's quirks over time.

Target audience: Power users who want a slim foldable that really goes the distance on battery life and performance.

Further considerations: MagicOS just pales in comparison to Samsung's One UI, so you'll find a better software experience elsewhere.

4. BEST FLIP PHONE

Samsung Galaxy Z Flip7

Price when reviewed: £1,049
Pros: Superb cover screen; great internal display; excellent main rear camera; top-tier software experience; seven years of updates
Cons: Battery life could be better; painfully slow 25-watt charging; still no telephoto camera

Just like with its Z Fold series, there was a moment in time when Samsung had given up quite a bit of ground to the competition, leaving us all wondering whether or not the tech giant could ever catch up again. Thankfully, those concerns are a thing of the past, cemented by the Galaxy Z Flip7.

The most obvious leap forward you'll spot, particularly against the Z Flip 6, is the total revamp of the cover screen. Now with a proper end-to-end 4.1-inch panel, the exterior display can be used without it feeling like a compromised experience, so you can respond to messages, check for directions and more, all without ever touching the interior display.

Speaking of which, the internal screen has been given a slight size increase, bumping to 6.9-inches. Having such a tall display readily available in a compact form also makes the Z Flip7 great for catching up on the latest movies or TV shows on the go.

It would be nice to see Samsung bump up not just the battery life but also the charging speeds in a successor, but it's a minor gripe against what is overall an outstanding flip phone that's bolstered by Samsung's highly refined software and long-term promise of updates.

The internal screen has been given a slight size increase, bumping to 6.9-inches.

Target audience: Anyone who wants to have their phone for the long-haul, with tons of promised software updates.

Further considerations: The battery life is instantly better by Motorola's flip phones, and you can buy the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip7 FE for less. It won't be long before the Z Flip 8 is unveiled either.

5. BEST FLIP PHONE DESIGN

Motorola Razr 60 Ultra

Price when reviewed: £1,999

Pros: Stunning, robust design; gorgeous displays; top-tier performance; excellent battery life; useful cover screen

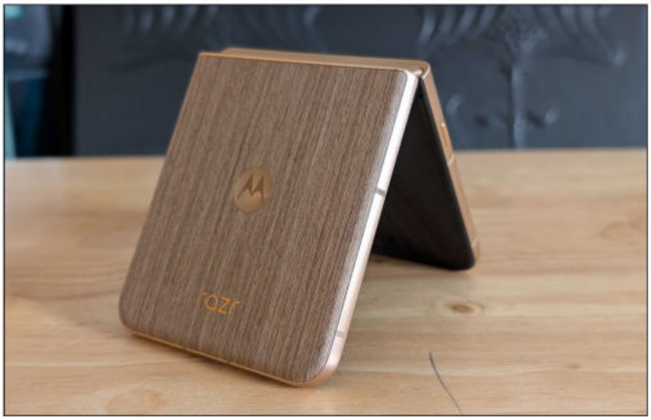
Cons: No telephoto camera; only four years of updates; expensive

While the competition is closer than ever thanks to the significant leaps made by the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip7, the Moto Razr 60 Ultra is still one of the best flip phones you can buy right now, with an experience that'll leave you wanting for very little.

You've probably already spotted as much from the included picture, but the Razr 60 Ultra is one stylish handset. While there are a few colourways available, the 'Mountain Trail' option that features a wood finish is just too good to pass on. It's the type of aesthetic that'll have your friends bubbling with envy as they wonder why their own phone doesn't look quite so slick.

Turn on the phone and the experience just gets even better as you're greeted with a bright and colourful 4-inch AMOLED display. While Samsung may have adopted the same end-to-end style, it still looks great on Motorola's device and its usability saves you from having to constantly open the phone when you want to quickly dive into an app.

Having a Snapdragon 8 Elite chipset under the hood is a huge boon, as everything loads up quickly and the experience of scrolling through menus and settings feels buttery smooth. It is a shame that you don't get quite as long an update cycle as you do with Samsung, but the trade-off can be worth it to those who prefer having a longer battery life.



The Razr 60 Ultra is one stylish handset.

Target audience: Heavy users who need a great battery life to get them through the day.

Further considerations: With only four years of updates promised, the longevity pales in comparison to what Samsung provides.

6. BEST SOFTWARE

Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold

Price when reviewed: £1,749

Pros: The first IP68-rated foldable; bigger battery; brighter screens; Pixelsnap magnets built in; decent performance

Cons: Not as quick as Snapdragon-powered rivals; cameras could use an upgrade; relatively chunky

Google had a tough time with its first-generation foldable but managed to steady the ship with the rather excellent Pixel 9 Pro Fold, which is still worth considering as you can no doubt find it for less now that the Pixel 10 Pro Fold has hit the scene. If you do prefer having the latest tech, however then there's lots to like about Google's newest foldable, not least its massive jump forward in durability.

Google has beefed up its 10 Pro Fold with an official IP68 rating for water and dust resistance.

Long-term durability has always been a concern for adopters of any foldable tech, and Google has made sure to assuage those fears by beefing up the 10 Pro Fold with an official IP68 rating for water and dust resistance. In fact, Google's device is the first foldable of its kind to have this rating, with the dust proofing being the important way it now beats rivals.

Across the board, there have been some great quality of life upgrades, including a larger 5,015mAh battery and a higher peak brightness of 3,000 nits on both displays. It's not quite the 5,000 nits reached by the Honor Magic V5, but it makes a big difference. Even more appreciated is the new Pixelsnap feature which allows the phone to use MagSafe-style accessories, including most of the ones originally designed for iPhones.

As we've come to expect from Pixel phones nowadays, the new Tensor G5 chipset, while solid in its own right, just can't quite match the performance of competing processors like the Snapdragon 8 Elite. It's less of an issue during everyday use but it can seriously hamper gaming, so if you are the type of person who likes to get in a few rounds of Call of Duty Mobile in their lunch hour, then you're better off with one of Honor or Samsung's foldables.

Target audience: Fans of stock Android and Google's AI features, durability, as well as magnetic wireless charging and accessories.

Target audience: The Tensor G5 can't keep up with foldable phones powered by the Snapdragon 8 Elite.

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The Mix Flip is able to deliver the same great photos that Xiaomi is known for.

7. BEST CAMERAS/ BATTERY COMBO

Xiaomi Mix Flip

Price when reviewed: £1,099

Pros: Decent battery life for a flip phone; good photos with the right lighting; swift performance

Cons: Pricier than rivals; no water resistance; cluttered software

Even though Samsung and Motorola lead the charge where flip phones are concerned, the Xiaomi Mix Flip still represents a solid alternative for anyone who's most interested in having a solid camera setup and decent battery life to back it up.

In scenarios with good lighting, the Mix Flip is able to deliver the same great photos that Xiaomi is known for. Portrait shots do an outstanding job of naturally elevating a subject from the background, whilst buildings and areas with lots of greenery can pop with colour.

You've also got a decent photo editor baked into the phone with very impressive AI-backed tools. For instance, Xiaomi's AI eraser doesn't miss a beat when it comes to taking unwanted photo-bombers out of a shot.

The 4,780mAh cell inside the phone can easily eke out a day and a half of use from a single charge, so it's very unlikely that you'll have any battery anxiety before reaching the end of a day. There's also 67-watt fast charging for getting the battery topped up again at speed.

Target audience: Buyers who value great battery life and solid daytime cameras in a single package.

Further considerations: The Mix Flip is still more expensive than the better flip phones on this list.

8. BEST VALUE

Motorola Razr 60

Price when reviewed: £799

Pros: Decent IP48-rated design; useful cover display; larger battery welcome

Cons: Not much has changed from Razr 50; relatively poor performance

While not the massive overhaul that some Razr 50 fans might have been hoping for, the Motorola Razr 60 is still a fantastic foldable phone and one that is crucially a great deal more affordable than its closest Samsung rival. Even though Samsung has plenty of trade-in offers, the £1,049 starting price of the Galaxy Z Flip7 is huge compared to the £799 tag put forth by Motorola.

The Motorola Razr 60 is a great deal more affordable than its closest Samsung rival.

The Razr 60 isn't just a reskinned Razr 50, however, as there are two key upgrades this time that are sure to appeal to flip phone users in search of a new device: a larger battery and better durability. Going from 4,200- to 4,500mAh, the Razr 60's battery is now able to get through a fairly heavy day of use and still have a decent amount of juice left in the tank.

Given that durability has long been a point of contention with foldable phones of all sizes and variations, now having an official IP48 rating ensures that the Razr 60 can do a far better job at withstanding dust particles, which, over time, can wreak havoc with a foldable crease. Again, these aren't major upgrades but niceties to have for added peace of mind.

Just like before, you're still getting the massive 3.4-inch external display, which offers up enough space to easily interact with apps at a moment's notice. If you want to do something more involved, like watch a bit of Netflix, then the 6.9-inch interior display, with a 2,640x1,080 resolution, 3,000 nits of peak brightness and 120Hz refresh rate can get the job done.

Target audience: Flip phone fans who want excellent value for money.

Further considerations: The Razr 50 isn't all that different and can now be found for even less.

9. BEST VALUE SAMSUNG

Samsung Galaxy Z Flip7 FE

Price when reviewed: £849

Pros: Solid design; lovely main display; excellent main camera; good everyday performance

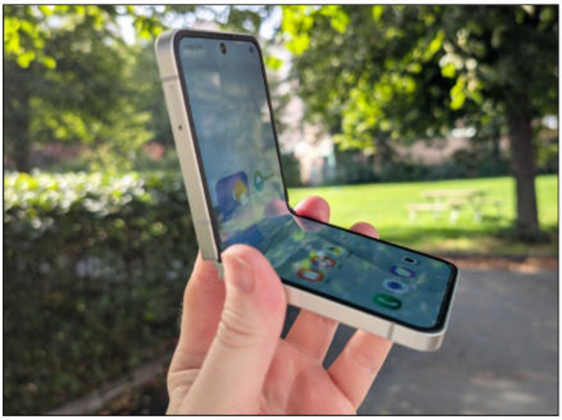
Cons: Underwhelming battery life; cover screen could be better; slow charging

It took quite a while for Samsung to finally meet the competition head-on and release a more budget-friendly alternative within its Z Flip range, but the wait was most certainly worth it as the Galaxy Z Flip7 FE presents quite the value proposition. Even though it has a lower price tag of £849 (affordable within the context of flip phones), the Flip7 FE is still a premium device.

The big allure here as to why you might buy the Flip7 FE over a competing device from Motorola is that Samsung promises seven years of software and security updates from the time of launch, giving you the freedom to use the 7 FE well into the future. If you're the type of person who likes to hold on to a phone for an extended period of time then this is a huge win.

You're also getting a gorgeous 6.7-inch AMOLED internal display which boasts the same degree of colour vibrancy and brightness that Samsung's phones are known for. Pair that with the detail rich 50Mp main camera sensor and you have plenty of space to edit your photos either manually or with a bit of help from Galaxy AI.

The only major let-down is that the 3.4-inch outer display feels far less functional than the almost end-to-end displays found on the most recent Motorola Razr phones, or even the full-fat Galaxy Z Flip7. Still, it's a reasonable trade-off for the lower price tag, plus Samsung provides a much cleaner version of Android than what you'll find with the competition.



Despite it's low £849 price tag, Samsung's Galaxy Z Flip7 FE is still a premium device.

Despite costing just £499, Nubia's Flip 5G gets a lot right.

Target audience: Samsung fans on a budget who still want to hop on board the foldable bandwagon.

Further considerations: The outer display isn't up to scratch compared to the latest Motorola Razr phones.

10. BEST BUDGET FLIP PHONE

Nubia Flip 5G

Price when reviewed: £499

Pros: Low price; distinctive design; attractive displays; solid battery life

Cons: Bloated software; mixed cameras; no software update commitment

With a starting price of just £499, the Nubia Flip 5G is the flip phone many people have been waiting for. It means you no longer have to pay flagship prices for a device that folds in half.

And despite its mid-range price, the Nubia Flip 5G gets a lot right. A statement design includes unique circular cover display, while the main display is one of the best around. You also get decent battery life and solid performance.

However, compromises have inevitably been made to keep it so affordable. That's most obvious when it comes to cameras, which tend to struggle in environments where the light isn't good. Relatively slow 33-watt charging and a lack of any official water resistance are also concerns. But the big thing that'll stop most people buying one is the software. Nubia's MyOS Android skin is cluttered and bloated, and there's no specific commitment to updates from the company.

It's still impressive value for money, but there are enough downsides for most people to look elsewhere.

Target audience: Anyone who's been waiting for a true budget flip phone.

Further considerations: If you shop around, you can get previous-gen Samsung and Motorola phones for not that much more.

Credit: Samsung

8 tips that'll change the way you take photos on your phone

You don't need a DSLR. DENISE BERGERT reports

You can take much better pictures on your smartphone than you might think. It's not only the technical specifications that determine how good your photos will be. Compared to a full-size DSLR or DSLM, for example, a smartphone is much lighter and quicker to use, giving you the chance to take great photos on the fly. With a little basic knowledge of lighting, perspective and composition, you can take impressive landscape, portrait or night-time shots.

This guide has practical tips and tricks that you can put into practice without any prior knowledge.

1. CLEAN YOUR CAMERA LENSES

Make sure your smartphone's camera lenses are clean.

Our first tip may sound obvious, but it's effective: make sure your smartphone's camera lenses are clean. With daily use or when carried in your pocket or bag, fingerprints, lint and dust can quickly build up on the camera module. This can lead to blurry photos.

Clean the lenses with a soft microfibre cloth before taking photos. If you don't have one to hand, you can also use a tissue. Stubborn smudges are best tackled with a little glass cleaner, which you can spray onto a kitchen towel and use to clean the camera module. If you're taking photos in the rain, regularly check that the camera lens is dry. Even small splashes of water can lead to blurred photos.

2. USE NATURAL LIGHT

Although the LED flash built into your smartphone is handy, it rarely helps you take good photos – unless you're going for a direct-flash or party-snapshot look. Natural light is far better.

Landscape shots can convey a completely different mood depending on the light. Direct sunlight creates deep shadows and a dramatic effect – especially if you convert the images to black and white.

The so-called 'golden hour' (one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset) provides a particularly warm and flattering light. During the 'Blue Hour' (before sunrise and after sunset), city scenes with golden street lamps in particular look very atmospheric thanks to the cooler lighting. Enable HDR mode in your camera app to capture as much detail as possible.

Tips for portraits: If you're taking photos in the midday sun, find a spot in the shade, as direct sunlight creates very harsh shadows on the face. The light quality is best at the point where the sun meets the shade – for example, at the entrance to an underpass or a passageway. You can also achieve 'beauty light' (soft, indirect light) by having your subject face a bright wall. This allows indirect light to fill in the shadows. Even on cloudy days, check where the sun is in the sky and position your subject's face accordingly.

Natural light is far better than your phone's LED flash.

3. USE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

A little bit of physical effort can also help you take better smartphone photos. Don't only take photos while standing – try crouching down or finding a higher vantage point. Changing your perspective adds more interest to your pictures.

For example, always photograph your dog or children while crouching down. This puts you at eye level with your subject, resulting in personal and lively pictures. A group photo, on the other hand, looks more interesting if you take it from above – for example, from a window.

Changing your perspective adds more interest to your pictures.

The so-called 'frog's-eye view' also gives an unusual angle. To achieve this, hold the camera very close to the ground and shoot upwards. This makes people look taller, buildings more imposing and trees downright huge.

4. COMPOSE YOUR SHOTS

The classic rules of composition from the world of art can also be applied to smartphone photography. Enable the ‘Grid’ or ‘Gridline’ function in your smartphone’s camera app. This divides the image into three equal horizontal and vertical sections and helps you follow the so-called ‘rule of thirds’. Always position your subject at one of the intersections of the lines. This makes your landscape shots and portraits appear more balanced and harmonious. Useful tip: you can also use the lines to ensure the horizon is lined up straight before taking the photo.

So-called ‘leading lines’ also add more visual interest to the image. For example, position a path, a river or a railway track in your photo so that it leads from the foreground towards the centre of the frame. This allows you to guide the viewer’s gaze towards your main subject. Frames are also a great compositional tool for creating varied images. For example, use archways or windows to ‘frame’ your subject.

Dividing an image into three equal horizontal and vertical sections and helps you follow the so-called ‘rule of thirds’.

5. TAKE SHARP NIGHT-TIME PHOTOS

Almost every modern smartphone now offers a night mode. When activated, the smartphone takes several shots in quick succession and combines them into a single image. This reduces image noise and gives you a brighter photo with more detail.

When taking night-time photos, however, it’s essential to keep your smartphone steady to achieve the best results. To do this, place your phone on or lean it against a wall, for example. Also, make sure to activate HDR mode. At night, artificial light sources such as street lamps or neon signs create a particularly atmospheric effect. After a rainy day, you can also achieve great results by capturing reflections in puddles.

If you find that night mode produces results that look too artificial, try using manual mode with a long exposure. To do this, keep the ISO setting as low as possible and increase the exposure time. Again, it's essential to keep your smartphone steady while taking the photo.

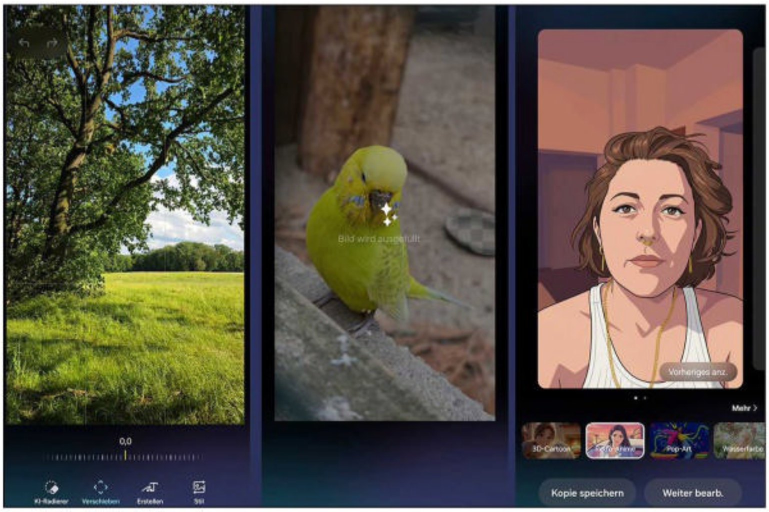
A phone's night mode takes several shots in quick succession and combines them into a single image.

6. USE YOUR SMARTPHONE CAMERA'S AI FEATURES

Almost every modern smartphone now offers so-called generative editing features that use artificial intelligence. On Samsung's Galaxy S models, for example, you can use the AI Eraser to remove objects from your photo. The AI automatically reconstructs the background and fills in the resulting gaps appropriately. It's now also possible to move or enlarge individual areas of an image directly within the Gallery app.

With Photo Assist, you can also edit images by entering text, swap out sections or insert additional elements. If you want to experiment creatively, you can also use AI to transform your photos into comic, animé or illustration styles.

Group photos can also benefit from AI support. Features such as 'Best Face' combine multiple shots to ensure that, as far


0,0
KI-Radierer
Verschieben
Erstellen
Stil
Bild wird ausgefüllt
Vorheriges anz.
Mehr >
3D-Cartoon
Retro-Anime
Pop-Art
Wasserfarbe
Kopie speichern
Weiter bearb.

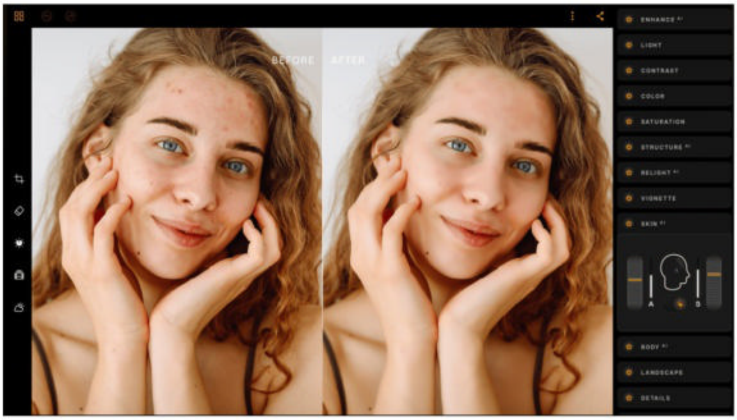
Almost every new smartphone offers generative editing features that use artificial intelligence.

as possible, everyone appears in the final image with their eyes open and a friendly expression.

7. OPTIMISE IMAGES IN POST-PROCESSING

Photo editing has never been as easy as it is today. Instead of sitting down at your PC and painstakingly familiarising yourself with the features of Photoshop and similar programmes, you can get the most out of your photos from the comfort of your sofa, using a smartphone app.

Basic functions such as rotating and cropping are usually already available in your phone's photo editor. If you're looking for more advanced editing options, check out Lightroom Mobile.


BEFORE
AFTER
ENHANCE
LIGHT
CONTRAST
COLOR
SATURATION
STRUCTURE
RELIGHT
VIGNETTE
SKIN
A
B
BODY
LANDSCAPE
DETAILS

You can get the most out of your photos from the comfort of your sofa, using a smartphone app.

It's a free app that allows you, among other things, to adjust the exposure and offers a range of colour presets.

Specialised image editing programmes such as Luminar Neo offer even more extensive options. The software can help you to optimise lighting conditions, retouch portraits or make targeted adjustments to individual areas of an image. Once downloaded, you can try the software out for free for seven days. The lifetime licences are currently on sale.

8. AVOID THESE MISTAKES

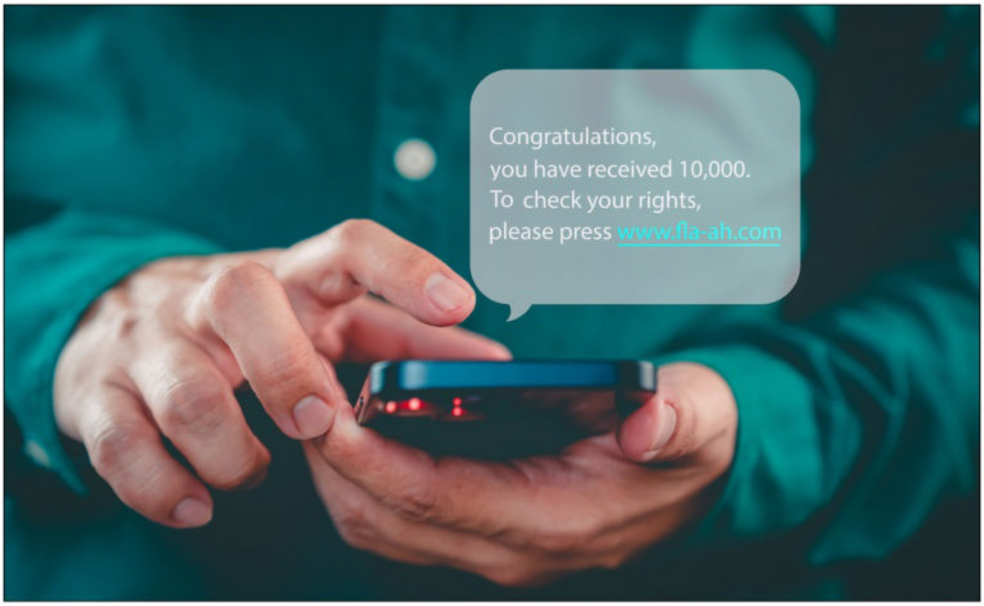
Digital zoom may well be tempting because it allows you to zoom in very close to your subject. However, this always comes at the expense of quality. Zoomed-in images usually look pixelated and blurry. This problem gets worse the closer you zoom in. It's better to move closer to your subject to get a sharp and well-exposed photo.

Also, make sure you don't accidentally get your finger in the shot when holding your smartphone. This can happen quickly, especially when using the wide-angle lens. While this lens is useful for landscape shots, avoid it altogether for portraits. The 'peephole effect' can quickly make your subject's nose look huge and their ears tiny.

Keeping your distance also applies to your smartphone's main camera. With a focal length of typically 24-28mm, it's also classified as a wide-angle lens. Portraits look more flattering if you keep a little more distance from your subject and crop the image during post-processing. If your smartphone also has a portrait lens, use that instead.

To take the best pictures possible, check out our recommendations in the August 2026 issue of *Tech Advisor* for the best camera phones we've tested.

Zoomed-in images usually look pixelated and blurry.


Congratulations,
you have received 10,000.
To check your rights,
please press www.fla-ah.com

Credit: ParinPix/Shutterstock

Change these 6 Android settings to stop phone scammers

It's time to fight back. STEFFEN ZELLFELDER reports

Whether it's the supposed bank employee, the fake police officer or the notorious 'grandparent' scam, telephone fraud has become a global epidemic.

Criminals use manipulated phone numbers via a process known as spoofing, and even AI-generated voices to put pressure on their victims. Unfortunately, this continues to be successful on too many occasions.

But here's the good news: tech companies are stepping up their game and fighting back. Google has integrated far-reaching protective measures into the Android operating system that tackle fraudsters even in the background.

From simple spam warnings to highly complex real-time analysis using artificial intelligence – here are six ways your smartphone protects you from the worst today.

1. SCAM DETECTION: AI LISTENS IN AND WARNS YOU IN REAL TIME

One of the latest features in the fight against fraudsters is ‘Scam Detection’. This function analyses ongoing calls directly on the smartphone. On newer Pixel phones, the on-device AI Gemini Nano is used for this purpose.

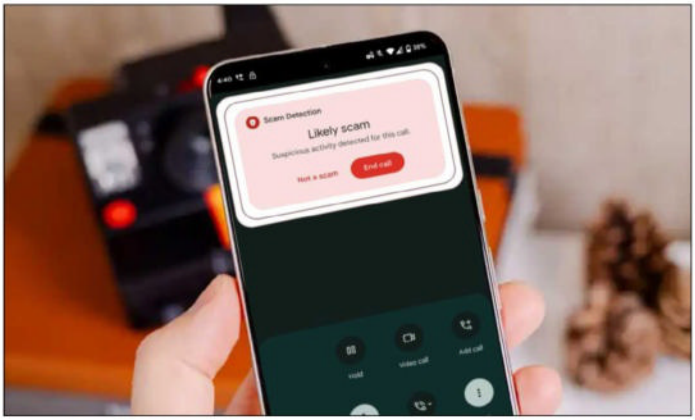
If the system detects typical scam patterns – such as when a caller pretends to be a bank employee and asks you to make an urgent bank transfer, disclose your PINs or install a remote maintenance app – a clear warning appears on the screen. In addition, the smartphone alerts the user to the potential scam attempt via a sound and vibration.

The analysis takes place entirely locally on the device. According to Google, neither call recordings nor transcripts are transmitted to servers.

2. FAKE CALL DETECTION: DEFENDING AGAINST AI VOICE CLONES

A particularly insidious trend continues to be shock calls, in which fraudsters use AI deepfakes to mimic the exact voice of a relative and, through number spoofing, even display the contact’s name (for example, ‘Mum’) on your screen.

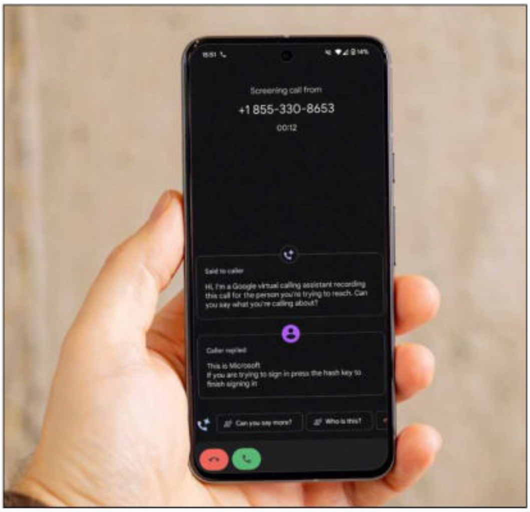
This is where Fake Call Detection comes into play. As soon as the call comes in, your smartphone establishes a silent connection in the background to the alleged caller’s real mobile phone using



Scam detection analyses ongoing calls directly on the smartphone.

encrypted RCS (Rich Communication Services) technology. During this digital handshake, the system asks: "Are you calling me right now?" If the other device replies "No", Android exposes the scam.

The key feature here is that your smartphone immediately removes the fake contact picture and name ("Mum") from the screen and labels the caller as "Unknown". At the same time, the system displays a visual warning about identity fraud and offers the 'Hang up' button. However, for this to work, both parties must be using the official Google Phone app.



Screening call from

+1 855-330-8653

00:12

Said to caller

Hi, I'm a Google virtual calling assistant recording this call for the person you're trying to reach. Can you say what you're calling about?

Caller replied

This is Microsoft
If you are trying to sign in press the hash key to finish signing in

The Verified Financial Calls feature is designed to protect Android users from fake calls in which fraudsters impersonate a bank's phone number.

3. PHONE CALL SPOOFING PROTECTION: "VERIFIED FINANCIAL CALLS"

In the fight against widespread banking scams, Google is working directly with participating financial institutions. The Verified Financial Calls feature is designed to protect Android users from fake calls in which fraudsters impersonate a bank's phone number.

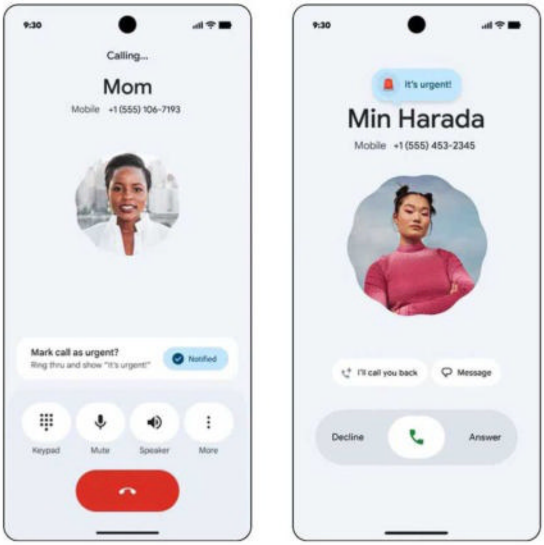
If you have installed the app of a participating bank (including Revolut), the system checks incoming calls from such numbers in real time in the background. If the app of a supported bank is installed on your smartphone, Android can verify incoming calls from that bank. It checks whether the call has been authorised by the bank.

If authenticity cannot be confirmed, or if the call comes from a number that is actually intended solely for incoming customer calls, Android will warn of a possible spoofing attempt or block the call. Users will then receive a corresponding notification on their screen.

The system also recognises so-called 'inbound-only' numbers. These are numbers belonging to the bank that are intended exclusively for incoming customer calls. If a call comes in from such a number, Android immediately identifies it as spoofing and blocks the connection. You will then receive a notification on your screen.

Incidentally, you can quickly check whether this feature is enabled on your device. The path in the settings is: Security & Privacy > More Security & Privacy > 'Verified Financial Calls' .

Note: As this feature requires a direct interface, this option will only appear in your Android settings once you have installed and set up a supported banking app on your smartphone. Unfortunately, there aren't many supported banking apps at the time of writing.


9:30
Calling...
Mom
Mobile +1 (555) 106-7193
Mark call as urgent?
Ring thru and show "It's urgent"
Notified
Keypad
Mute
Speaker
More
9:30
It's urgent!
Min Harada
Mobile +1 (555) 453-2345
I'll call you back
Message
Decline
Answer

Call Screening asks the caller to state their name and the reason for the call.

4. CALL SCREENING AND CALL REASON: YOUR DIGITAL BUTLER

Another effective tool against unknown numbers is Call Screening. If an unknown number calls, you don't have to answer it yourself. Instead, Google acts as an automated butler to handle the call. The caller is asked to state their name and the reason for the call.

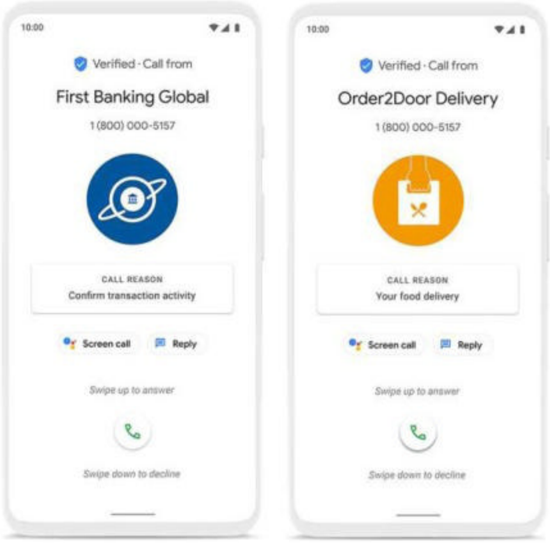
Meanwhile, you can read what the caller is saying in real time on your screen and, at the touch of a button, decide whether to accept the call or block it as spam. This is complemented by the Call Reason feature, which allows reputable companies to digitally convey the reason for the call before you even pick up. The full Call Screening feature is currently available primarily on Google Pixel smartphones. However, the UK version differs significantly from the fully automated US model. In the UK, you must manually activate the filter at the moment the call comes in by pressing a button.

However, a similar feature on Samsung Galaxy handsets will do the work for you regardless of where you're based.

5. CALLER ID AND SPAM PROTECTION: THE CLASSIC

For several generations of Android now, the basic spam protection in the Google Phone app has been the first line of defence. As soon as a call comes in, the system immediately checks the number against a database maintained by Google containing known spam and business numbers.

If the number has already been flagged, the call is clearly marked as spam – for example, through a flashing display or warning messages such as 'Suspected spam'. You can configure the app to reject such calls straight away. This is complemented by Verified Calls, which allows legitimate businesses to be displayed with their official company logo.


10:00
Verified · Call from
First Banking Global
1 (800) 000-5157
CALL REASON
Confirm transaction activity
Screen call
Reply
Swipe up to answer
Swipe down to decline
10:00
Verified · Call from
Order2Door Delivery
1 (800) 000-5157
CALL REASON
Your food delivery
Screen call
Reply
Swipe up to answer
Swipe down to decline

Verified Calls allows legitimate businesses to be displayed with their official company logo.

6. SMS SPAM FILTER: ADDITIONAL PROTECTION

As many cases of telephone fraud begin with a preparatory text message (such as fake parcel notifications containing a link), Google has equipped its messaging app, Google Messages, with enhanced protection features.

The app uses automated filtering mechanisms to detect suspicious content. This includes phishing messages, fake parcel or competition notifications, and known scam patterns featuring manipulated links. Detected messages can be automatically moved to a spam or protected folder, or flagged accordingly. Some of the detection takes place directly on the device, meaning that a full analysis via external servers is not necessary.

OVERVIEW: WHAT SECURITY FEATURES ARE AVAILABLE FOR YOUR SMARTPHONE?

The availability of these features depends heavily on the smartphone

SECURITY TECHNOLOGY	HOW IT WORKS	ANDROID VERSION	AVAILABILITY/ DEVICES
Scam Detection	Real-time AI analysis of the conversation for signs of fraud (locally on the device via Gemini Nano).	From Android 16 (first preview from Android 15)	Initially exclusive to Google Pixel (from Pixel 6 onwards), with plans to extend to other manufacturers.
Fake Call Detection	Digital RCS handshake for identity verification. In the event of fraud, the name and contact photo are deleted immediately.	From Android 12	Initially rolled out for Google Pixel devices. Later available for all devices with the official 'Phone by Google' app.
Spoofing Protection (Verified Financial Calls)	Automated verification against installed banking apps (e.g. Revolut) and blocking of purely inbound numbers.	From Android 11	All compatible Android devices with partner financial apps enabled.
Call Screening	Google Assistant answers unknown calls and transcribes them in real time.	From Android 10	Exclusive to Google Pixel smartphones (and selected Motorola devices).
Caller ID and Spam	Cross-referenced against global databases; a red warning display appears if spam is suspected.	From Android 9	All Android devices, provided the official Google Phone app is set as the default.
SMS Spam Protection	Filters out phishing links, prize draws and crypto scams into a separate folder.	From Android 8	All Android devices, provided the official Google Messages app is used.

manufacturer and the version of Android installed. Google traditionally rolls out its best features to its own Pixel devices first. However, Samsung and other Android phone owners can usually install the Google Phone app from the Play Store to unlock compatible services. See above table for details.

EXTRA PROTECTION: THE BEST ANTI-SCAM APPS

If you want to specifically enhance your protection – particularly on smartphones that don't fully support Google's built-in features – you'll find robust alternatives in the Play Store. These apps cross-reference incoming calls against extensive databases and cloud-based lists:

Truecaller Premium Caller ID: The international market leader. Thanks to several million users worldwide, it offers lightning-fast warnings about new scams. Please note that the app requires extensive data permissions.

Hiya Spam blocker: Built into Samsung phones, it's available as a free download for all Android and iPhone owners. Designed for real-time call detection, using public white pages and AI analysis.

Tellows Caller ID & Blocker: The community-based solution. Users rate numbers using a 'tellows Score' based on their risk potential (for example, 'prize draw' or 'ping call'). You can also block entire area codes (for example, from abroad) across the board.

Important: These apps require system permissions (such as access to your contacts and permission to overlay the phone app) in order to alert you in an emergency. You should therefore always download such tools exclusively from the official Google Play Store.

CONCLUSION: CALL SAFETY IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Anyone with a modern Android smartphone is no longer defenceless against scammers. Users of the Google Pixel range in particular benefit from a robust, modern shield comprising on-device AI and clever tools such as Fake Call Detection or Call Screening at the touch of a button.

To ensure that the recommended third-party apps can alert you in good time in an emergency, you must grant them the necessary system permissions during setup – Google's own built-in tools usually come with these permissions by default as system apps.

However, even on all other Android phones, risks can be significantly minimised by consistently using Google's official Phone and Messages apps and enabling the spam filters within them.

Truecaller is available for iPhone and Android.

This hidden app makes every Samsung Galaxy phone better

Good Lock finding it! FLORIAN KASTNER reports

Samsung has been making excellent smartphones for years. However, the full potential of One UI isn't necessarily found in the system settings, but in an app that many Galaxy phone owners never install: Good Lock. Find out here what the app can do, which modules are worth using, and how to set up Good Lock.

SAMSUNG GOOD LOCK

Good Lock is an official Samsung service that acts as a hub for a collection of add-on modules. Each of these modules delves deep into a specific area of One UI: the lock screen, navigation, the camera, notifications, multitasking and much more. The result is a level of customisation that was previously only available with custom ROMs. The app is completely free, developed directly by Samsung, and is therefore just as secure as One UI itself.

COMPATIBILITY

Good Lock runs on every Samsung Galaxy phone running One UI 6 or later. Specifically, this means:

Galaxy S series: S23, S23, S23 Ultra and newer (including the S26 range).
Galaxy Z series: Z Flip 5 and Z Fold 5 and later.
Galaxy A series: Selected models with One UI 6.
Galaxy Tab: Tab S9 and newer.

Good Lock is available in the Samsung Galaxy Store and, since the end of 2025, via the Google Play Store, removing the previous restriction to certain countries. However, individual modules may still be subject to regional restrictions.

Important: The individual modules are not installed automatically. You choose which modules you wish to activate. This saves storage space and keeps the system organised.

INSTALLATION

1. Open the Galaxy Store on your Samsung device (or the Google Play Store).
2. Search for "Good Lock". The icon shows four coloured, interlocking jigsaw pieces.
3. Install and open the app.
4. Select the modules you want directly in Good Lock and download them by tapping the icon with a down arrow inside a box

Tip: Don't install all the modules at once. Start with two or three that meet your specific needs.

STRUCTURE

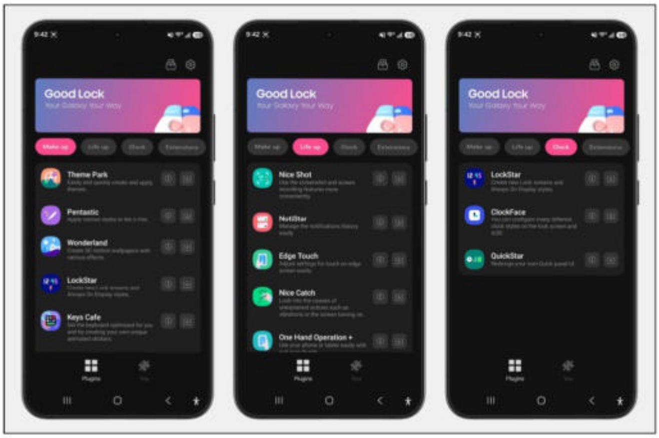
Good Lock itself is simply the control centre. Once installed, you'll see a clear interface with four sections:

Make up: Modules for visual customisation, such as themes, lock screen and wallpapers.

Life up: Modules for functions and efficiency, such as navigation, camera, multitasking and audio.

Clock: A separate category for clock modules (for example, ClockFace for the Always-On Display).

Extensions: Additional modules available across both the 'Make up' and 'Life up' main categories.


Good Lock
Your Galaxy Your Way
Theme Park
Pentastic
Wonderland
LockStar
Keys Cafe
Nice Shot
NotiStar
Edge Touch
Nice Catch
One Hand Operation +
LockStar
ClockFace
QuickStar

Good Lock itself is simply the control centre.

If you tap on a module, you can download and install it directly from there, without having to go via the Galaxy Store. In total, there are currently more than 20 modules available.

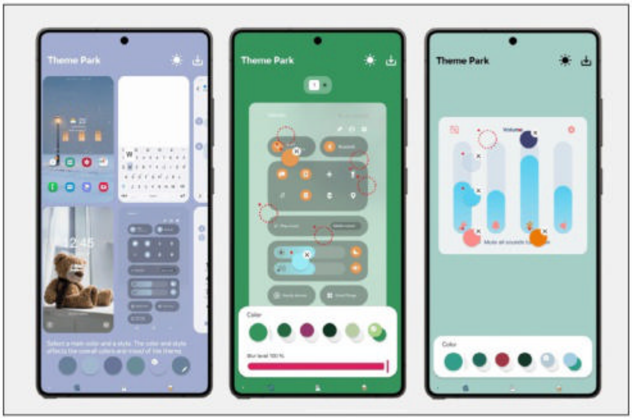
Theme Park is your gateway to visual personalisation. The module allows you to create your own themes: colours, icon shapes, background images and fonts can be freely combined. Existing icon packs from the Play Store can be integrated and managed.

Since 2026, there has even been an AI theme generator. You describe in text what you want your theme to look like, and the AI automatically creates a suitable colour scheme, including icons and a background image.

One-Handed Operation

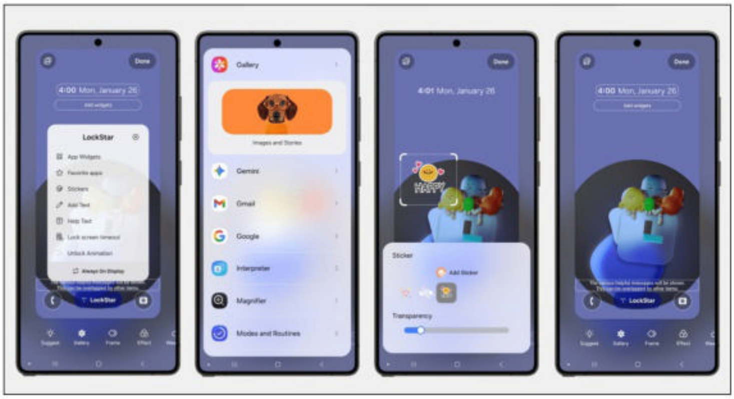
If, like me, you own a Galaxy S Ultra or Z Fold, you've no doubt already noticed that one-handed operation is a challenge. One Hand Operation solves this problem with six configurable Edge gestures (three per side). Each gesture can be customised individually: Back, App Overview, Screenshot, Torch, Notifications and more.

What makes this special is that the module works alongside the standard


Theme Park
Theme Park
Theme Park

Theme Park is your gateway to visual personalisation.

navigation bar, adding extra swipe gestures to it.


Done
4:00 Mon, January 26
LockStar
App Widgets
Favorite apps
Stickers
Add Text
Help Text
Lock screen timeout
Unlock Animation
Always On Display
Gallery
Images and Stories
Gemini
Gmail
Google
Interpreter
Magnifier
Modes and Routines
4:01 Mon, January 26
HAPPY
Sticker
Add Sticker
Transparency
Suggest
Gallery
Frame
Effect

LockStar unlocks app widgets on the lock screen that Samsung doesn't allow by default.

LockStar

The lock screen is the first thing you see when you pick up your smartphone. However, One UI only allows limited customisation. LockStar opens up significantly more scope here. Using the WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor, you can freely drag the clock, date, widgets and app shortcuts around the screen, in both portrait and landscape orientation. You can simply hide any elements you don't like.

Particularly useful: LockStar unlocks app widgets on the lock screen that Samsung doesn't allow by default. This means you can view your calendar, step counter or weather forecast directly on the locked screen without having to unlock your smartphone first. App shortcuts can also be placed wherever you like. Tapping the camera icon launches the camera without going through the unlock process.

Also new for 2026 are animated unlock effects. The new 'Swirl' animation sweeps the lock screen inwards as you unlock it, whilst other styles such as 'Curtain', 'Ripple', 'Mosaic' or 'Wave' ensure that even unlocking your phone becomes a little visual treat.

MultiStar

MultiStar significantly expands multitasking capabilities. Any app can be opened in split-screen mode or as a pop-up window (even those that do not officially support it). New for 2026 are app pairs on the home screen, which launch two apps simultaneously in split-screen mode.

Essential for foldable users: MultiStar controls how apps switch between the cover and main screens when the device is opened and closed. Among its features is the ability to run any app

Without Good Lock, the Galaxy Z Flip cover screen is very limited.

on the Z Flip cover screen, which is disabled by default.

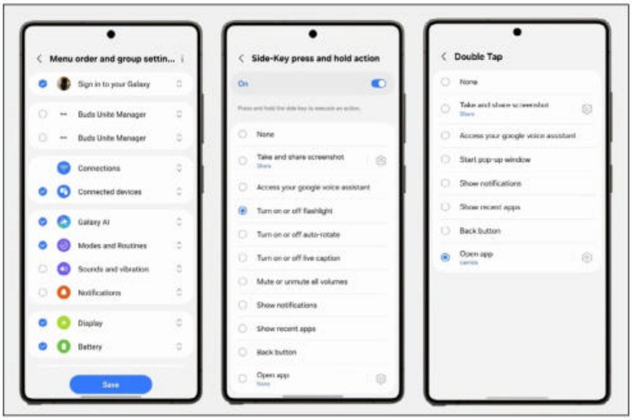
Samsung DeX users benefit from options such as higher resolutions or more than five simultaneous apps on the connected display.

RegiStar

RegiStar is the module for anyone who finds the standard button and gesture navigation options don't go far enough.

The best-known feature is the Backtap gesture: if you tap the back of your smartphone twice, a freely selectable app or function (such as the torch, a screenshot or Expert RAW) opens. Especially if the power button is already reserved for Gemini or the camera, Backtap provides a handy third control option that remains completely invisible.

What's more, RegiStar also lets you remap the side button: double-taps and long presses can each be linked to their own actions independently of one another. If you wish, you can use a long press to launch a specific app directly instead of the voice assistant.



Menu order and group settin...

☑ Sign in to your Galaxy
☐ Buds Unite Manager
☐ Buds Unite Manager
Connections
☑ Connected devices
☑ Galaxy AI
☑ Modes and Routines
☐ Sounds and vibration
☐ Notifications
☑ Display
☑ Battery

Side-Key press and hold action

On

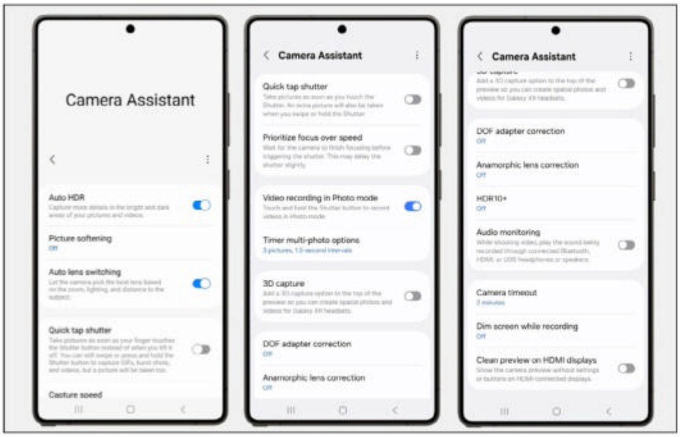
○ None
○ Take and share screenshot
○ Access your google voice assistant
● Turn on or off flashlight
○ Turn on or off auto-rotate
○ Turn on or off live caption
○ Mute or unmute all volumes
○ Show notifications
○ Show recent apps
○ Back button
○ Open app

Double Tap

○ None
○ Take and share screenshot
○ Access your google voice assistant
○ Start pop-up window
○ Show notifications
○ Show recent apps
○ Back button
● Open app

RegiStar is the module for anyone who finds the standard button and gesture navigation options don't go far enough.

Less well-known, but just as useful: with RegiStar, you can reorganise the One UI settings menu. Sections you never need can be hidden, whilst frequently used ones can be moved to the top. The built-in settings history logs all recent changes made to the system.



Camera Assistant

Auto HDR ●
Picture softening
Off
Auto lens switching ●
Quick tap shutter ○
Capture speed

Camera Assistant

Quick tap shutter ○
Prioritize focus over speed ○
Video recording in Photo mode ●
Timer multi-photo options
3 pictures, 1.5-second intervals
3D capture ○
DOF adapter correction
Off
Anamorphic lens correction
Off

Camera Assistant

DOF adapter correction
Off
Anamorphic lens correction
Off
HDR10+
Off
Audio monitoring ○
Camera timeout
Dim screen while recording
Off
Clean preview on HDMI displays ○

Camera Assistant unlocks hidden camera features.

NavStar

You see the navigation bar every day, but it's almost impossible to customise it in One UI. NavStar changes that. Provided you use classic button navigation, you can freely customise the layout, order and colour of the buttons, change the background colour of the bar and display an additional button that allows you to hide the bar at the touch of a button if required.

If you navigate using swipe gestures, you can adjust the sensitivity and active area for the left and right sides independently of one another. This is handy if, for example, you want more space on the left for the 'Back' gesture. You can also choose whether the line at the bottom of the screen remains visible or fades discreetly out of view.

Camera Assistant

Camera Assistant unlocks hidden camera features. On the Galaxy S26 range, the module activates the 24Mp mode, which utilises AI fusion processing: sharper than 12Mp, smaller file sizes than 50Mp. A good balance for everyday use. Other features include the following, amongst others:

Interval burst mode allows for timed bursts of shots, for example to prepare time-lapse sequences.

Auto HDR activates automatically when the camera detects significant differences in brightness.

Automatic lens selection allows the device to choose the optimal lens itself, depending on the subject and zoom level.

The Astro Mode shortcut provides direct access to night photography mode.

Focus peaking in Pro mode highlights in-focus areas of the image in colour, which is particularly helpful when focusing manually.

Custom resolution presets allow you to permanently save your preferred megapixel settings and switch between them quickly.

NotiStar

Notifications sometimes disappear too quickly. NotiStar solves this problem with a complete notification history that stores all incoming messages until you delete them yourself. Even notifications accidentally swiped away can be viewed at any time.

NotiStar also offers a personalised filtering function: you can specify which apps you want to receive notifications from and which you don't. Keyword filters make this even more precise: For example, you can set it so that you're only notified by a particular app if the message contains a specific word, such as 'invoice' or 'appointment'. Notifications that don't meet the filter criteria are discarded or simply stored in the history without actively disturbing you.

NotiStar is also handy for the lock screen. It works there too, allowing you to control exactly what is visible on the locked display. In February 2026, Samsung updated the module with a revamped notification management system, which further improves the overview across multiple apps.

OTHER MODULES

Home Up: Customise the launcher, such as grid size, app drawer and share menu.
Keys Cafe: Keyboard layout, keyboard effects and sounds.
QuickStar: Add or remove status bar icons; open Quick Settings directly.
Routines: Advanced Bixby automations with touch macros and app-based triggers.
Wonderland: Dynamic parallax wallpapers with motion effects.
ClockFace: Customisable clock for the Always-On Display and lock screen.
Game Booster: Gamepad touch mapping, CPU clock speed limit, game intro fast-forward.
Pentastic: S Pen pointer styles and Air Command customisations (for S Pen devices).
Nice Catch: System log for notifications, vibrations and settings changes.

Android’s subscription era is here – and it’s not OK

From OS to AI, Android is losing the openness that made it great.
ANURAG SINGH reports

Android is not having a good time, and a big reason is that Google doesn’t seem to care about the OS the way it used to. Looking at the current state of Android, it’s hard not to feel that the operating system has taken a back seat to AI. Android used to be one of Google’s flagship products. Today, Android feels like little more than a vehicle for the company’s AI ambitions.

I’m not against AI. What concerns me is how quickly Android is being reshaped around AI services, cloud processing, and ongoing subscriptions. The most heavily promoted features are no longer automatically part of your phone. They're services that require an internet connection, a Google account and, in some cases, a monthly fee.

The past few Google I/O events have been dominated by AI announcements, while Android has been pushed into separate events and receives far less attention.

Many of the headline features Google showcases today are AI-powered, cloud-dependent, and likely to end up behind a paywall. Android is slowly moving from an operating system you buy with your phone to a platform where the most interesting features come with an ongoing subscription attached.

FROM ON-DEVICE TO SUBSCRIPTION

Google keeps telling us that Android is entering a new era, but the company's recent announcements point to a different reality. Android no longer appears to be its main product. AI subscriptions are. Scan through this year's Google I/O announcements and the pattern becomes obvious.

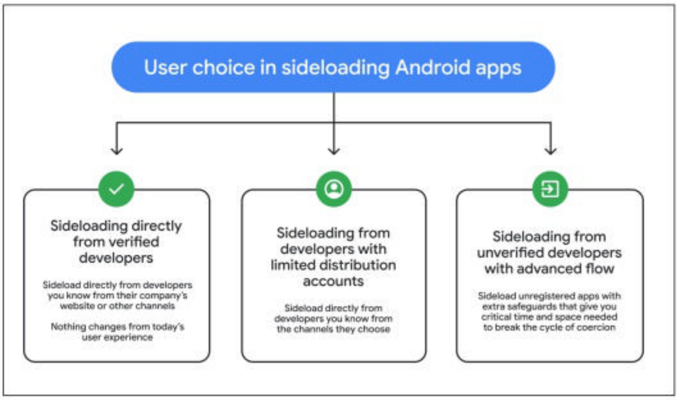
Nearly every major announcement revolved around Gemini, AI agents, AI-powered creation tools, and cloud-based intelligence. Android itself played a supporting role, serving primarily as the platform through which Google delivers those services.

The problem is that many of these headline features are not really Android features at all. They're subscription products. If you want access to Daily Brief, Gemini Spark, Information Agents, advanced Gemini capabilities, and many of the other tools Google spent its keynote promoting, you need to pay a monthly fee.

And these services don't come cheap. You'll pay £4.49 per month for a basic package. There are higher-tier plans priced at £18.99 and from £79.99 that include some of these same features, with more cloud storage and a higher usage limit.

This represents a major change from what Android used to be. For years, the value proposition was straightforward. You bought a phone, and Google's software improvements arrived through updates and new app features. Better cameras, smarter assistants, improved voice recognition, and cloud-powered conveniences all became part of the ecosystem.

Today, Google increasingly places its most ambitious software behind Google AI paywalls. The operating system receives updates, but the features Google wants people talking about live somewhere else.


User choice in sideloading Android apps
Sideloading directly from verified developers
Sideload directly from developers you know from their company's website or other channels
Nothing changes from today's user experience
Sideloading from developers with limited distribution accounts
Sideload directly from developers you know from the channels they choose
Sideloading from unverified developers with advanced flow
Sideload unregistered apps with extra safeguards that give you critical time and space needed to break the cycle of coercion

It feels as though Android is moving towards a more tightly managed ecosystem that looks a lot closer to iOS.

ANDROID IS ALSO BECOMING MORE RESTRICTIVE

There are broader changes happening across the Android ecosystem. Google's recent push to require developer registration outside the Play Store has raised concerns about the future of sideloading, alternative app stores, and open-source software distribution.

Increasingly it feels as though Android is moving away from the open, user-controlled platform that made it successful and toward a more tightly managed ecosystem that looks a lot closer to iOS.

Google's argument is security, and that, at least, is not nonsense. Malware is a real problem on Android, and people absolutely get tricked into installing dangerous APKs from random websites. But the solution Google is choosing changes the nature of Android itself.

Google is inserting itself deeper into the process of deciding which developers are allowed to distribute software to Android users. It's an issue that could have been solved by improving warnings and educating users.

Google says sideloading is not going away and, technically, that's true. But if unregistered apps become harder to install on certified Android devices, then the practical meaning of sideloading changes.

This is the same pattern we're seeing with AI subscriptions. Google is changing where the power is located. The most advanced AI tools sit behind paid subscriptions. Similarly, the most flexible app distribution paths now sit behind developer verification, advanced flows, and Google-managed safety gates. There's more corporate control and less consumer choice.

The phone you bought is now less important to Google than the services the company controls around it. And that won't be changing any time soon.

FOUNDRY